

DREAMBUILDERS: UNDOCUCOMPETENCE AMONG EDUCATORS
IN THE NORTH CAROLINA COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM

A Dissertation
by
STACY HOLLIDAY

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APPROVED BY:

Vachel Miller, Ed.D.
Chairperson, Dissertation Committee

Shanan Fitts, Ph.D.
Member, Dissertation Committee

Cameron Lippard, Ph.D.
Member, Dissertation Committee

Tracy Goodson-Espy
Director, Educational Leadership Doctoral Program

Michael J. McKenzie, Ph.D.
Dean, Cratis D. Williams School of Graduate Studies

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Abstract

DREAMBUILDERS: UNDOCUCOMPETENCE AMONG EDUCATORS IN THE NORTH CAROLINA COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM

Stacy Holliday

B.S., Appalachian State University

M.Ed., University of North Carolina at Charlotte

M.S., University of West Alabama

Ed.S., Appalachian State University

Ed.D., Appalachian State UniversityEd.D., Appalachian State University

Dissertation Committee Chairperson: Dr. Vachel Miller

Previous research studies have demonstrated the impact of validation by institutional agents, on the success of undocumented students. How do community college educators within NC provide support and validation for this student population? Do they have the knowledge to assist undocumented students to effectively cope with the challenges they face? Do they have the positive attitudes toward this student population that enable them to genuinely validate their strengths and ease the fear they often experience? This study seeks to answer these questions by examining how educators have developed individual undocu-competence and what methods they suggest should be used to build ‘undocu-competence’ within NC. Undocu-competence is defined as the awareness, knowledge, and skills necessary for institutional agents to support undocumented students (Nienhusser & Espino, 2016). The research design was a concurrent mixed methods study that included a survey and a follow up interview, with 274 survey respondents and 24 interviewees, including representatives from 32 colleges within the NC Community College system.

The study findings reveal participants possessed low knowledge but held overall favorable attitudes toward the undocumented student population. However, there were also negative attitudes that emerged among responses from a few of the participants, which may negatively impact students' ability to be successful. The level of contact and amount of knowledge was positively correlated with more favorable attitudes. One theme that very clearly emerged from each interview and many of the survey responses, was that these students are a "hidden population" and that the issue seems hidden on campus, because it is never openly discussed. Without visible systems of support, undocumented students feel they must continue to hide their status and feel afraid.

Types of advocacy included raising awareness among colleagues, locating alternate forms of financial resources that students could be eligible for, and visibly demonstrating they were supportive so students would have somewhere on campus they could feel safe disclosing their status and asking for assistance. Findings suggest that institutions should create opportunities where real student stories could be shared, ideally by the undocumented students themselves, about the challenges they face at their particular institution. Specifically, 70% of respondents said they wished they knew more about undocumented students and 80% believed their institution should educate faculty and staff about the challenges undocumented students face and how they can help support them. Through personal interaction, the injustice and barriers that these students encounter due to their current status in the U.S. become evident and it is much harder to ignore the injustice when it has a face and a name. This research calls for us to engage in institutional transformation from oppressive to empowering, with educational equity and inclusive excellence as our driving goal.

Acknowledgments

‘Si Se Puede’

That was the phrase that I clung to at so many points along this Doctoral journey, a phrase that I first learned 17 years ago as I walked the streets for the first time holding a sign and adding my voice to the fight for a better future, and one that I have since come to gain a deep appreciation for as I have ‘seen’ and ‘felt’ the true meaning. I would like to thank all of the individuals I have met during my lifetime who believe in the possibility of a better world where diverse culture is embraced and celebrated instead of hidden and suppressed. I would like to thank the wonderful students, friends, and extended family who are undocumented that I have had the good fortune to get to know over the years, who have been my inspiration, as they have taught me the true meaning of resilience. It was their example that inspired me to keep going despite the myriad of life challenges I have faced while enrolled in this doctoral program. As I faced moments when I began to think the final production of this dissertation may be impossible, it was in part the faces of all of the students I have had the pleasure to assist and also to learn from, their families, and their communities who are resilient beyond imagination in the face of their vivid fears based on a terrible reality, that inspired me to persist. As they refuse to give up on pursuing their education, despite the many barriers that stand in their way, I certainly couldn’t give up on completing this dream of helping to raise awareness of the challenges these students are facing within our North Carolina community colleges.

It was also the love and support of my family and friends who believed in me and continued to remind me of the importance of this work. I was blessed to be raised in a family who accepts responsibility for challenging systemic inequities and I have them to thank for teaching me how to continuously question assumptions and how to recognize opportunities to advocate for change. I am grateful for their love, encouragement, and support! It takes a village to complete a dissertation, especially while raising two children, and I could not have possibly continued without the assistance of so many. The last words of my grandfather, Pop, during my undergraduate career, have always echoed in my head “Study hard. Go show them how smart you are. I know you can do it!” and I was eager to share the title ‘Doc Holliday’ with my grandfather, Papa, who earned it through life wisdom, not from any postsecondary institution. My grandmothers’ pride in me has always been inspirational and their unwavering confidence along with the encouragement from aunts and cousins, friends like Liz and Aaron Sleeper, Margaret Annunziata, Susan Burleson, Jennifer Allen, and many others who provided that valuable cultural capital that I discuss within this dissertation.

I would like to thank my mother, father, and brother for being shining examples of resilience as they have each faced their own challenges and have taught me that yes, it is always worth it, to balance all of the many competing demands, when you accomplish your goals at the end. They have navigated difficulties others couldn’t bear, and through hard work and determination have persisted through to success. I watched my mother pursue her education, completing each step from Associates to Masters as she raised my brother and I, and it was that example that helped me balance my children and my education. I hope my example to my own sons will also encourage them to be lifelong learners.

I would like to thank my wonderful colleagues within the North Carolina Community College system, especially all of those who took the time to participate and add their voice to this study. Thank you to every faculty, staff and administrator within the North Carolina Community College system who have dedicated their lives to continue to transform the individual futures of the students they work with on a daily basis and collectively work toward breaking the cycle of intergenerational poverty. It has been my honor to work alongside some of the best colleagues anyone could ever hope to have.

Although my current endeavors take me beyond the leadership role of a single college, I will continue to strive to impact systemic inequity in our postsecondary system through comprehensive transformation that results in equitable outcomes for all students, including undocumented students. I am blessed to be surrounded by intelligent, innovative, team members as we collaboratively engage in leading the Student Success Center network across the United States. Along with each member of the Network, the Executive Directors and the national service providers, I truly believe we will accomplish significant change.

I would like to thank my committee for their wisdom, insight, their patience and their commitment to this work. I would like to thank Dr. Cameron Lippard for the sociological lens he brought to this work that I believe greatly strengthened it, and for sticking with me through the entire process. I would like to thank Dr. Shanan Fitts for her challenging questions that at times shook me but always pushed me further than I thought I could go and helped drive thoughtful analysis and meaningful interpretation of the valuable data I had collected. Most of all, I would like to thank Dr. Vachel Miller, my beloved professor of many of my doctoral courses, my Chair, a tremendous example of a social justice advocate, an empowerment agent, and my friend.

Dedication

To all of the wonderful people who happen to lack official documentation that entitles them to the same rights everyone who surrounds them enjoys and often takes for granted. These are friends and family, I have been fortunate enough to meet through the years, who have inspired me with their resilience and continue to be my motivation for advocating in every way I can to fight for them to have the rights they deserve.

To my beautiful bicultural boys, who have encouraged me with their smiles and hugs when I felt overwhelmed and who also motivate me to continue to strive to do my part to create a better world, where they won't be discriminated against simply because they are Latino.

To my fantastic phenomenal parents, both because they raised me from an early age to appreciate every human and helped me embrace my ability to strive to do good in this world, standing up for those who can't always stand up for themselves, and also because without their encouragement and help with my children, I never would have been able to complete this study and publish this dissertation. To all of my wonderful friends and family members who provided me with the social capital and network of support that I believe every student deserves, and that I commit to continuing to advocate for as long as I am on this earth.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

I just got off the phone from a depressing phone call with a university admissions office and dread having to share the news with one of our students whose dream it has been to attend a prestigious public four-year institution in NC, but whose dream now seems solidly out of reach. As a community college administrator, in my opinion, this particular student is one of our best! She has been on our Dean's list every semester, is the secretary of our Student Government Association, and the President of our Hispanic Culture Club. I have happily served as her mentor, and since I met her, she has always clearly articulated her goal, to transfer to her chosen university and eventually to become a doctor. She came to my office to ask about a notification she received for an outstanding requirement the Admissions Office told her needed to be completed, a Test of English as a Foreign Language, TOEFL. I quickly assured her there must be some misunderstanding and called the Admissions Office to speak to the Director. The TOEFL is a test that international students are required to take, but Esperanza has lived in the United States for eight years, graduated with honors from high school, and will be completing an Associate's Degree at our institution in May. They also listed SAT scores as a requirement, but official copies are not usually required for transfer students like Esperanza¹. After a brief conversation with the Director, both requirements were waived. She did however have to complete a residency application and during the phone call, the Director mentioned that she has been deemed an out-of-state student. Although, Esperanza's mother is a permanent resident and has claimed Esperanza on her taxes for the last six years, without legal documentation certifying Esperanza herself as a United States citizen or permanent resident, she will be required to pay out of state tuition. Since, I have mentored Esperanza and have become very familiar with her situation, I know that even with the partial scholarships she has been promised, there is no way that she'll be able to afford that amount of tuition. Ultimately, unless there is a change either in federal or state laws, Esperanza will be unable to fulfill her dream.

I documented that experience in a journal, one afternoon in 2015 and still remember it well. Unfortunately, since then, at least within North Carolina, there has been little change in policy that would demonstrate acceptance and inclusion of undocumented students within post-secondary institutions, nor the removal or reduction of barriers in their path to obtain a college education. Esperanza is only one of millions of students in the United States who face what are often insurmountable barriers to achieving their dreams. They work so hard assimilating to a brand-new culture, studying to learn both English and the topics covered

¹pseudonym used to protect identity

within the school system simultaneously. Many are brought here as young children. Even though they are forced to navigate the challenges they face in crossing the border and assimilating to a new culture while facing racial prejudices and discrimination, they overcome those challenges to achieve academic success in high school (Albrecht, 2007; Zota, 2009, Brice, 2017). For many of these students, whose parents were determined to bring them to the United States in search of a better future, their first encounter with the true consequences of their parents' decision is when they face the limitations to their future, in the form of the barriers to their pursuit of a college education. In a discussion with Esperanza she described this as "learning what it means to be illegal".

Throughout their K-12 education, undocumented students are surrounded by claims of neutrality, that all students have equal chances to succeed and that a college education is obtainable by everyone (Potochnick, 2014; Bozick & Miller, 2014; Gildersleeve & Ranero, 2010). Unfortunately for undocumented immigrants, this is a falsehood that they become painfully aware of their junior or senior years as their peers begin the process of college applications. When all their friends are applying to college and submitting paperwork to receive financial aid, the harsh reality becomes blatantly visible. (Stebbleton & Aleixo, 2015; Chen & Rhoads, 2016; Gonzalez, 2016). They are not eligible for aid (College Foundation of North Carolina, 2018). They are not even eligible to pay in-state tuition, regardless of how many years they have been living as a resident of North Carolina (Residency Determination Services, 2018).

With the exception of 21 states, undocumented students are classified as out-of-state students and charged three to seven times higher tuition (Núñez & Holthaus, 2017). Only eight states (California, Hawaii, Minnesota, New Mexico, Oregon, Texas and Washington,

and Connecticut most recently in April of 2018) have implemented policies that allow them to provide state aid to undocumented students enrolled in their institutions (Educators for Fair Consideration, 2012; Thomas & Silber, 2018; Anderson, 2018). Two states, South Carolina and Alabama, have barred undocumented students from even attending college at all. The NC Community College system has changed their policies five times since 2001, and yet while hopes of improved college access in North Carolina were raised in 2009 when the ban that barred undocumented students from attending NC community colleges was repealed, students are still required to pay out of state tuition at all post-secondary institutions within the state (Núñez & Holthaus, 2017). Although there are now scholarships for undocumented students, for most students (as is true in Esperanza's case), they do not come close to covering the costs of out-of-state tuition. That bitter truth makes four-year institutions seem a gated community to these students, one to which they don't have the entry code.

Fortunately for Esperanza, she was validated for her strengths and resilience by faculty and staff at her community college and encouraged to not only become engaged at the institution but to share her story nationally through an opportunity to speak as a keynote speaker at the annual Achieving the Dream conference that approximately 2300 faculty, staff, and administrators from community colleges across the United States attend each year (ATD, 2017) and to continue sharing her story as additional opportunities arose. Three years after that initial acceptance which she was forced to decline, she has been offered a full private scholarship and is now enrolled and successful in her program at a prominent four-year institution. In a recent conversation, Esperanza explained that the support by institutional agents who are engaged in transformational resistance and their encouragement for her to be an engaged advocate as well, enabled her to receive the assistance she needed to overcome

the barrier of paying out-of-state tuition which she could not afford. Unfortunately, there are many undocumented students who are not able to find allies or receive support from institutional agents that help them navigate the barriers they encounter (Acevedo-Gil, Santos, Alonso, & Solorzano, 2015).

Current Context

Increasing numbers of undocumented immigrants in the United States. While the number of students currently enrolling is declining from year to year at most North Carolina community colleges, estimates of the number of undocumented students continues to grow. Following calculations by the Department of Homeland Security, who subtract the numbers of documented permanent residents, and attempt to account for emigration and mortality rates, they estimate that there are currently 11.5 million undocumented immigrants living within the United States. Other estimates from key data sources range from 11 to 11.5 million (Batalova, Hooker, Capps & Bachmeier, 2014; Educators for Fair Consideration, 2012). According to the U.S. Census data estimates in 2015, there are 56.5 million members of the United States population who are Latinx², which equates to 17.6 % and makes Latinxs the largest ethnic and racial minority. Of those Latinxs, 34.5% were foreign born and an additional 33 million were native born but have at least one foreign-born parent, which means that one in five people in the United States are either first or second-generation immigrants (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). While the U.S. Census data captures the number of foreign born residents and reports that more than a third of the Latinx

²Latinx- a gender neutral alternative to Latino or Latina

population living within the United States, is indeed foreign born, it can only estimate what percentage are undocumented. In 2014 approximately 80% of the undocumented immigrant population were Latinx and approximately 71% were from Mexico and Central America (Batalova, Hooker, Capps & Bachmeier, 2014).

Approximately 1.4 million of the undocumented immigrant population are children under the age of 18 and an additional 1.6 million are traditional college age, 18-24. Over 80% of the undocumented immigrant population within the United States are younger than 44 (Baker & Rytina, 2012). Statistics also show that approximately 80,000 undocumented students reach high school graduation age every year in the United States, and approximately 65,000 of those who will graduate, have been living in the country for five years or more. Only an estimated five to ten percent of those graduates enroll in a postsecondary institution of any type and far fewer complete a credential (Batalova, Hooker, Capps & Bachmeier, 2014). It is clear then, that this is an under-served population across the nation, and the data collected within North Carolina seems to suggest this is very true within the state as well.

At the beginning of the millennium, the Latinx population within North Carolina experienced a growth rate of 394% in a single decade, the highest in the nation (Kochhar, Suro, & Tafoya, 2005). Among the new immigrant states in the Southeast, North Carolina ranked eighth in the largest percentage change in Latinx population growth (Gallagher & Lippard, 2011). Although that growth has now slowed, the Latinx population still accounted for more than half of the population growth between 2000-2014 (Stepler & Lopez, 2016). Specifically, between 2000 and 2008, North Carolina had a growth rate of 68% in its Latinx population and the two largest cities in North Carolina, Charlotte and Raleigh, have seen growth rates of 600% and 700% respectively over the past two decades (Gallagher &

Lippard, 2011). Among the Latinx population in North Carolina in 2014, the median age was 24 and 44% were immigrants, with poverty rates of 28% for those aged 18 years old and above, and 41% for those 17 years or below (Pew Hispanic Center, 2016). In 2014, North Carolina had the eighth largest population of undocumented immigrants nationally (Pew Hispanic Center, 2016). North Carolina also has the eighth largest population of DACA recipients (USCIS, 2018). This means higher education institutions within North Carolina have a rapidly increasing undocumented population they could be serving.

Undocumented students enrolling in community colleges. Estimates of the exact number of undocumented students enrolled at a post-secondary institution within the United States vary widely between data sources because it is such a difficult number to obtain. Many colleges in states without explicit policies operate on a “don’t ask, don’t tell” process, and therefore there is no clear system for tracking. Although the complete numbers of undocumented students are not officially recorded, the current estimate is that there are between 200,000-250,000 undocumented students enrolled in college throughout the United States which comprises 2% of all college students nationwide (Pew Hispanic Center, 2016). In Texas, one of the first states to grant tuition equity [charging undocumented students the in-state tuition rate], 25,000 undocumented students are currently enrolled in a post-secondary institution which is two percent of all undergraduate students in Texas. The majority, 72% of those 25,000, are enrolled in community colleges and 28% are at universities (Vasilogambros, 2016).

Since most colleges do not ask students to report status nor collect any systemic data on students’ status there are no exact measures across the United States of numbers of undocumented students enrolled at each institution. However, it is generally accepted that the

proxies of non-resident Latinx students can be used to infer the number of undocumented students, since 80% of undocumented immigrants in the United States are Latinx (Pew Hispanic Center, 2011). Using these proxies, analysis certainly suggests that community colleges have the highest number of undocumented students enrolled across the United States. Nationally, community colleges serve 42% of the U.S. undergraduate population, and 56% of Latinx students who are enrolled in post-secondary institutions are enrolled at community colleges, a disproportionate number compared to 39% of White students and 44% of Black students (Ma & Baum, 2016). Historically, this number has been higher for Latinx immigrants, with 57.9% beginning at a community college (Hagy & Staniec, 2002). It seems reasonable that similar enrollment patterns within North Carolina could be inferred and based on those statistics in the states with a more reliable data gathering method, it suggests that a much larger percentage of undocumented students may be enrolled in community colleges, than four-year institutions within the state.

Some researchers have suggested that community colleges are appealing to Latinx immigrant students because they are affordable, conveniently located, offer flexible schedules and do not involve the selective admissions procedures of four-year university institutions (Martinez & Fernandez, 2004). Nienhusser and Espino (2016) have suggested that the majority of undocumented students who enroll in postsecondary education do so at community colleges due to reduced tuition. The tuition at four-year institutions in North Carolina could be cost-prohibitive for many undocumented immigrant students who are forced to pay out-of-state tuition, almost 300% higher on average than in-state tuition in North Carolina. Advocates of tuition equity emphasize the potential to “improve educational and economic opportunities for young people in North Carolina” (Forter Sirota & Mitchell,

2014, p.3). They point to the increase in college enrollment, 3% for undocumented students and a 33% increase in young Latinx adults, as well as the seven percent decrease in the number of high school dropouts in the states that have adopted tuition equity policies as a promise of the possibility that such legislation could bring to North Carolina.

Although the access to higher education in the United States has dramatically increased from previous decades, there are still underserved and undereducated populations that merit attention in research. National research conducted in 2014 show that only 15% of Hispanics living in the United States have a bachelor's or higher degree and 31% have less than a high school degree (Krogstad, 2016). This compares to 41% of whites, and 22% of blacks, that have a bachelor's degree. According to the 2009 Census data among 25- to 34-year old immigrants, only six percent of those from Mexico had earned a bachelor's degree and only an additional ten percent of Mexican immigrants had completed any college at all (Zota, 2009). Results from a study by the Pew Hispanic Center (Lopez, 2009) show that 89% of Latinxs aged 16-25 believe college education is important to success in life and yet only 48% say they plan to get a college degree themselves, compared to 60% of the general U.S. population. Only 29% of Latinxs who were immigrants indicated plans to obtain a Bachelor's degree.

However, while the gap in these percentages of educational attainment hardly seems equitable, the number of Latinxs 25 years and over who do have a bachelor's degree has increased 80% over the last decade (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). College enrollment for Latinxs has also increased and in 2014, 33% are enrolled in two or four-year colleges (Krogstad, 2016). Since at least a percentage of the Latinx population within the United States are undocumented, it could be suggested that this is a reflection of the increased access

to higher education that the undocumented student population is now entitled to, in states who have passed their own DREAM acts and allow undocumented students to attend at in-state tuition rates. This seems to be supported by the improved educational outcomes and increased numbers of graduates in these states, especially those in which these students are also eligible to receive aid (Flores, 2010). Yet, even though there are now more states that are offering tuition equity to the undocumented student population (currently all or at least some public colleges in 21 states) only eight states, including California and Texas, provide undocumented students with some type of financial aid to assist them in paying for college (Núñez & Holthaus, 2017).

Current legislation impacting undocumented students. Although the DREAM acts have only been passed within some states and never at the federal level, there has been federal legislation approved that offered temporary protection to undocumented students who qualified and applied. In June 2012, the Secretary of Homeland Security issued a Presidential Memorandum from President Barak Obama entitled “Exercising Prosecutorial Discretion with Respect to Individuals Who Came to the United States as Children” that established the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Act (DACA) policy (Napolitano, 2012). DACA is a status conferred through this executive action of President Obama to qualified applicants, which provides temporary protection from deportation, the opportunity to receive a Social Security number, the ability to work, and temporary lawful presence (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, n.d.) This program grants two years of work authorization and relief from deportation to youth who meet the eligibility criteria. They must be at least 15 and have entered the United States before the age of 16, and before June 2007. They must either be enrolled in school or have earned a high school diploma, and, must not have been convicted

of a felony or three or more misdemeanors, or otherwise be considered a threat to national security (Department of Homeland Security, 2016).

The calculations from the Migration Policy Institute (Zong, Ruiz Soto, Batalova, Gelatt, & Capps, 2017) estimate that approximately 1.3 million people are eligible for DACA, based on the specified criteria. The latest data published by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services in August of 2018, shows that 908,456 applications had been accepted which indicates that 70% of those eligible have applied. Of those, 90% have been approved, nine percent were denied, and the remaining one percent are pending (USCIS, 2018). In a report released by the Migration Policy Institute (Zong et. al, 2017) analyzing data from a variety of sources, researchers found that 55% of DACA holders are currently employed and 18% are enrolled in college.

Although, DACA does provide temporary relief from deportation, it is not a permanent solution, offering no pathway to citizenship, and therefore these students often face the same challenges and live with the same fears as undocumented students with no papers at all (Brice, 2017; Mangan, 2017; Gonzalez, Stein, Prandoni, Eades, & Magalhaes, 2015) Chacon (2016) describes the state of “liminal legality” that students are living in, “the temporal and legal instability of their freedom from banishment at the hands of the state” (p.717). Gamez, Lopez, and Overton (2017) extend this concept to that of “liminal positionality” in which students are *legal enough* to enroll “but not *legal enough* to qualify for in-state tuition and state or federal financial assistance.” (p. 147)

Since the inception, even those who qualified and were approved under the DACA policy, have lived with the uncertainty based on the temporary nature of the status (Hsin & Ortega, 2018; Benuto, Casas, Cummings, & Newlands, 2018). Donald Trump confirmed

those fears were valid in September of 2017, when he announced he was rescinding the Presidential memorandum that allowed undocumented students to apply for DACA and gave a six-month extension before full implementation, to effectively end the program March 5, 2018 (Shear & Davis, 2017). However, multiple lawsuits have been filed that challenge the rescission of the program and since the first preliminary injunction was granted by the California's District Court in January 2018 current DACA recipients have remained eligible to renew their two-year work permits but no new initial applications can be submitted (NILC, 2018). In each of these cases currently filed in the U.S. District Courts, the preliminary rulings issued would reverse Trump's termination of the program, but there are currently appeals pending in the Court of Appeals in the Second, Fourth and Ninth Circuits (Rojas, 2018).

On August 31, 2018 Judge Hanen denied a motion for injunction that was submitted with a Texas lawsuit, *Texas v. Nielson*. Unlike the others that have been filed, the Texas lawsuit has challenged the lawfulness of the original executive action and attempted to halt the acceptance of renewal applications while the case was under consideration. In his order Judge Hanen stated it would be impossible now to "put the toothpaste back in the tube" or "unscramble the egg". He reasoned that "to try to put it back in the shell with only a preliminary injunction record, and perhaps at greater risk to many, does not make sense nor serve the best interests of this country." (NILC, 2018, para. 5) Yet, all of this uncertainty has definitely impacted not only the students who are aging into eligibility but also those previous recipients who are now less likely to submit their application for renewal. Between January and March of 2018, approximately 70,000 applications for DACA renewal were

submitted, compared to more than double that number submitted between January and March of 2017 (Rojas, 2018).

Undocumented students in North Carolina community colleges. The mission of the North Carolina Community College as stated in the Strategic Plan for 2018-2022 (NCCCS, 2018) is “to open the door to high quality, accessible educational opportunities that minimize barriers to postsecondary education, maximize student success, develop a globally and multi-culturally competent workforce, and improve the lives and well-being of individuals”. Dallas Herring, referred to as the “Father of the Community College System”, was quoted as describing the philosophy of education in North Carolina as “belief in the incomparable worth of all human beings” and stated “That is why the doors to the institutions of North Carolina’s system of community colleges must never be closed to anyone of suitable age who can learn what they teach. We must take people where they are and carry them as far as they can go within the assigned functions of the system” (NCCCS, 2018, p. 3). It certainly seems then, that not only the acceptance of [through open doors] but also the support for and high-quality service to undocumented students [as human beings of suitable age living in North Carolina] is well aligned with both the current and original mission of the North Carolina community college system. Accordingly, it also seems that each institution that is a member of the North Carolina Community College system should strive to minimize the barriers to post-secondary education and to implement strategies to maximize the success of all their enrolled students including those who may be undocumented.

Purpose of the Study

This study aims to explore how the institutional agents, faculty and staff such as those described above, who act as allies for undocumented students, developed their undocu-competence. ‘Undocu-competence’ is a relatively new term that has been mainly used to describe institutional capacity to advance equity and excellence through a lens of social justice and educationally sound practices (Kravitz, 2017). This study focused on individual undocu-competence defined as the awareness, knowledge, and skills necessary for institutional agents to support undocumented students (Nienhusser & Espino, 2016). I deployed a survey and conducted follow-up interviews to address the following research questions:

- 1) What knowledge do respondents who are faculty and staff in the North Carolina Community College system possess about undocumented students?
- 2) What attitudes do respondents who are faculty and staff in the North Carolina Community College system hold toward this student group?
- 3) How do participants perceive any contact they’ve had with undocumented students and how do they perceive that contact has impacted their knowledge and attitudes?
- 4) How do participants provide validation to undocumented students?
- 5) Do participants currently serve as allies for undocumented students and if so what types of supportive practices or advocacy initiatives are they engaged in?
- 6) How do participants who identify as allies explain that they have developed undocu-competence?

This study explored these research questions through a concurrent mixed methods design with a quan-QUAL approach that included two phases, a survey collector gathering both quantitative and qualitative data, and a 45 minute follow up interview that was semi-

structured in format. There were 274 respondents to the survey that represented 32 colleges within the NC Community College system and from that group of respondents, there were 24 interviewees that represented 19 colleges. The data collected from the survey and interviews was analyzed through the qualitative approach of thematic coding to answer the research questions above.

Definition of Key Terms

This is certainly a controversial topic and one needs to look no further than the myriad of terms used to describe this student population. The term ‘illegal immigrant’ often abbreviated to simply the term ‘illegals’ is still found throughout media sources, though certainly mostly conservative. But it has now become a common term among political discourse as Donald Trump has entered the Office of the President and uses it without hesitation. The term ‘undocumented immigrant’ is much more commonly accepted and used often by members of this population, in an attempt to shift focus to a problem with the system and not the person. However, other scholars (Hartelius, 2016) have questioned the use of this term as well since it excludes them from the rights afforded to those who are documented members of the bureaucracy and may perhaps minimize the chance they’ll be seen as deserving of any significant change. Within this dissertation study, unless I am specifically quoting a direct source, I will use the term ‘undocumented students’. Also, for the purposes of this dissertation, the term ‘undocumented’ will include students who may be ‘DACA-mented’ (defined above) but not have any permanent legally safe status that protects the vulnerable state they are currently living in.

The National Immigration Law Center provides the definition of an undocumented student as “a foreign national who 1) entered the United States without inspection or fraudulent documents; or 2) entered legally as a nonimmigrant but then violated the terms of his or her status and remained in the United States without authorization” (Educators for Fair Consideration, 2014, p.1). For the purposes of this dissertation study, the definition presented by Passel and Cohn (2014) will be used to define the term undocumented student, as an individual who is not a U.S. citizen, does not hold a current permanent resident visa, and who has not been granted admission under rules for a longer-term residence or work permit. In this study, I refer to ‘DREAMers’ to encompass students who are undocumented, who were brought here as children, usually through no choice of their own, have attended public school for some length of time and graduated from secondary school in the U.S. This study also includes ‘DACAmended’ students in this group of DREAMers, those students who have applied for and received the temporary protected status under DACA.

Other terms used often in this study surround the concept of social justice, advocacy, and transformational resistance. Social justice in education aims to alleviate and eradicate inequitable educational outcomes for marginalized student populations (Furman, 2012). The purpose of advocacy as conceptualized in this study is to facilitate greater “inclusivity, fairness, empowerment, and equity and fairness, especially for oppressed and silenced groups”, in this case, undocumented students and an advocate “takes stands and engages in action aimed at producing social change, possibly in conflict with institutional opponents” (Marshall and Anderson, 2009, p. 18). ‘Advocacy’ will be used in this study to describe “qualities that include an active helping style, focus that attempts to change environmental barriers, and recognition of the need for prevention and intervention” (Field & Baker, 2004,

p.56). Transformational resistance was defined by Solorzano and Delgado Bernal (2001) as “political, collective, conscious, and motivated by a sense that individual and social change are possible” (p. 320). In this study the concept of transformational resistance includes “conscious engagement in critique of oppression that is motivated by a commitment to social justice” (p.325). Also, it is this researcher’s belief that all professionals at the community college contribute to the education of the students enrolled, and so, as a point of clarification, the term ‘educators’ is all inclusive of both faculty and staff members across the college campuses.

Significance of Topic

This is an important topic that is both aligned with the mission of the North Carolina community college system, to open the door to accessible high-quality education that minimizes the barriers to post-secondary education and contributes to the existing body of research focusing on undocumented students enrolled at community colleges. Although DACA recipients within the 15-32 year age band enroll in college at almost equal rates as U.S. citizens in the equivalent age band [18% vs 20%] they are much less likely to have completed college, only 4% of the undocumented students within the age band vs. 18% of those who are native born. These statistics indicate inequity in access and support that demand further attention in research. The existing studies, as described within the literature review included in the next chapter, have demonstrated the impact of validation by institutional agents, on the success of undocumented students. Yet, how do community college educators within North Carolina provide support and validation for this student population? Do they have enough knowledge to assist undocumented students to effectively

cope with the challenges they face? Do they have the positive attitudes toward this student population that enable them to genuinely validate their strengths and ease the fear they often experience?

This study seeks to explore the answers to those questions, by examining how educators, who are advocates, have developed the undocu-competence they possess and what methods they may suggest be used to build the undocu-competence within North Carolina community colleges. Chapter 2 of this dissertation includes a review of the current literature focusing on undocumented students at community colleges. Chapter 3 describes the mixed methods engaged in this study, through the survey and interview process with current North Carolina community college educators, and Chapters 4 and 5 describe the findings of each phase. Chapter 6 provides recommendations offered by interview participants and myself as a researcher informed by the study findings, that may be beneficial as the institutions within North Carolina seek to fulfill their mission to improve the lives and well-beings of all individuals.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Theoretical Background

The literature applying theory and theoretical constructs to the concept of faculty and staff support for undocumented students at community colleges is still in its infancy. I explored Critical Race Theory (CRT) as an overarching foundational framework, but more specifically LatCrit which has emerged from CRT and provides a lens with which to consider the impact on Latinx students as LatCrit has highlighted the struggles faced by this student population. Student engagement theory is also useful to frame this study, given the prior research findings about the positive impact educators can have, especially on diverse student populations by providing support and validation. Other researchers have explored the role educators can serve as social justice allies who engage in transformational resistance. The concept of undocu-competence is situated within the intersection of these theories and this chapter will provide an overview of the literature and how each contributes to the significance of the concept. This chapter also provides an overview of the related literature currently emerging in the field, focused on Latinx students within higher education and those factors that impact their success.

Critical race theory. One foundational theory that has provided a general lens with which many researchers have approached studies on this topic seems to be Critical Race Theory (CRT). CRT aims to confront and disrupt dominant ideologies found in policies and practices (Solorzano, 1998; Yosso, 2005). Solorzano (1998) outlined five central tenets of CRT (as listed in Acevedo-Gil et al., 2015)

- 1) Centrality and intersectionality of race and racism
- 2) Challenging the Dominant Perspective
- 3) Commitment to Social Justice
- 4) Valuing Experiential Knowledge
- 5) Maintaining an Interdisciplinary Perspective

Critical race theorists accept that race and racism have been normalized and are deeply embedded in social institutions. They also emphasize the manner in which racism intersects with other types of oppression, simultaneously and fluidly. DeNicolo et al. (2015) asserted that “at both conscious and subconscious levels, racism permeates every aspect of U.S. society, and in turn this produces both material and psychological consequences for people of color who suffer through racism” (DeNicolo, Gonzalez, Morales, & Romani, 2015, p.229). CRT challenges well established historical notions of meritocracy, objectivity, race and gender neutrality, color blindness and equal opportunity and researchers seek to illuminate and to end all forms of oppression (Solorzano, 1998). Bonilla-Silva (2003) referred to color blind ideology characterized by statements such as “I don’t see color” or “we’re all Americans” as “racism without racists” (p.13). CRT adamantly supports the value of the lived experiences of Communities of Color and emphasizes the inclusion of the voice of historically marginalized populations, in a central place within the body of scholarly research.

Although many critical race scholars emphasize the qualitative methodology as the only form of sharing the voice of marginalized populations, others have suggested that it is possible to extend into mixed methodology and even quantitative methods, which may have more influence on large scale improvement to educational policy (Covarrubias & Velez,

2013). Dixon and Rousseau (2005) assert that CRT is “problem-centered” and neither inherently qualitative nor quantitative, but rather that the problem should “determine the method, not the other way around”, and that “inequity in education should be addressed by any means necessary” (p. 22). Creswell and Clark (2011) described transformative mixed methodology as change-oriented, seeking to advance social justice causes, which is certainly aligned with critical race theory. DeCuir-Gunby and Walker-DeVose (2013) posit that it is possible to adopt a critical race perspective in mixed methodology research through a transformative-emancipatory mixed methodology design and suggest a qualitative dominant exploratory design QUAL-> quan, with the quantitative phase supporting the qualitative phase, or an explanatory approach quan->QUAL with the emphasis remaining on the qualitative. Critical race quantitative intersectionality (CRQI) has been proposed as a model of quantitative research guided by CRT, with the goal of challenging oppression and achieving social justice by assessing the impact of racism and other forms of subordination (Covarrubias & Velez, 2013). Central principles of CRQI confront the traditional claim of neutrality of quantitative data or that numbers alone could possibly explain anything, since numbers “cannot speak for themselves” (p.277). Instead CRQI aims to provide a multi-dimensional analysis and contextualize the quantitative data.

Critical race scholars recognize the influence of the scholar’s own position and identity on the research process and therefore it is essential for the critical race scholar to position themselves. Milner (2007) developed the “Framework of Researcher Racial and Cultural Positionality” to guide researchers through this process of developing “racial and cultural consciousness in their scholarship” (Rodricks & McCoy, 2015, p.52). His framework included scholars researching themselves by posing racially and culturally

grounded questions prior to and during research, researching themselves in relation to the people and communities involved in their studies, and engaging in a collaborative process of reflection with participants. I engaged in this process at various stages throughout the design, data collection, and analysis of this study and have included a section on my own researcher positionality within Chapter 3.

Critical race theory within education has been centered on five main themes that are aligned with the central tenets of the theory, commitment to social justice, and to countering dominant discourse, the racism present within the educational system, the value of experiential knowledge, and praxis as a tool for transformation leading to racial justice (Solorzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). Critical race theory (CRT) focuses on the ways in which race, class, gender, sexuality and other forms of oppression impact the educational experiences of People of Color (Huber, 2010) Critical race theorists challenge the way higher education in America and American society in general continue to reinforce race and ethnic based inequities (Solorzano, 1997; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001; Maldonado, Rhoads, & Buenavista, 2005). This study emerges from CRT and examines the racial and ethnic inequity currently present within community colleges for undocumented students, and the manner in which that is reinforced by the current policies within the NC community college system.

CRT challenges the often well-intended but dominant driven constructs such as meritocracy and colorblindness which attempt to portray educational institutions as neutral systems that should or even can function in the same ways for all students (Huber, 2010). But Critical Race scholars acknowledge the challenge of recognizing “oppression in the academy” (Rodricks & McCoy, p.55) and the difficulty of both learning from voices many

may not want to hear as well as learning how to even hear the voices that have traditionally been ignored (Gallagher, 2008a, p.72). Lather (2008) explains the challenge of moving “toward a constant unlearning and relearning that facilitates a practice of critique that is racially marked and generative of research approaches that are responsible to the struggle of voice, the possibilities and limits of connecting across difference and the productivity of simultaneous tension and reparation in solidarity efforts with the other” (p.228) This study was designed from an approach intended to reveal the ways in which the voices of undocumented students may currently be ignored and oppressed within the institution of North Carolina community colleges.

LatCrit theory. CRT first emerged within the field of law during the post-Civil Rights movement of the 1960’s and therefore has traditionally been positioned within a Black/White binary (Brayboy, 2005) but branches have emerged from CRT that seek to illustrate how members of specific racial identities experience racism such as LatCrit, AsianCrit, and TribalCrit. LatCrit emerged as a theoretical framework during a colloquium on Latinx issues during the mid-1990’s (Museus, 2013) and encompasses the lived experiences of Chicanxs , and Latinxs. LatCrit scholars have focused on the intersectionality of racism, sexism, and classism, with Latinxs sexuality, culture, language, immigration status (Yosso, 20005). Specifically, as a theory LatCrit emphasizes factors that affect Latinxs such as the Spanish language and the legal and historical aspects of Latinx immigration to the United States (Jones et al., 2014). In LatCrit a common counternarrative tool used by scholars is the ‘testimonio’. Testimonios have been defined as “a narration of lived experience related to a collective history, shared to bring awareness to conditions faced by oppressed peoples, in solidarity with others engaged in similar struggles” that “communicate

neglected perspectives, experiences, or histories” (DeNicolo, Gonzalez, Morales, & Romani, 2015, p.230).

LatCrit Theory has informed many of the studies that have been conducted with regard to undocumented students that focus on empowering students and highlighting their voice as participants (Zell, 2010; Lopez, 2010; Oseguera, Locke, & Vega, 2009; Cole & Espinoza, 2008). These studies have examined students’ sense of belonging, and the challenges they face to access and success. This study departs from the pattern of those studies and focuses on faculty and staff as study participants. There has been one other study recently conducted in 2016 that focused on faculty and staff in California, Connecticut, Georgia, and Wisconsin exploring Undocumented/DACAmented Status Competency (UDSC) (Nienhusser & Espino, 2016). This study builds on Nienhusser and Espino’s research on the concept of UDSC and focuses on educators within North Carolina.

The survey design was informed by LatCrit and survey questions and response choices were derived from the accounts of oppression that emerge from testimonios when undocumented students have shared their lived experiences within LatCrit studies (Lopez, 2010; Oseguera, Locke, & Vega, 2009; Cole & Espinoza, 2008). The students within these LatCrit studies have also discussed the strong positive impact of the faculty and staff they have found to confide in, and how that support has contributed to their ability to be resilient in face of challenges (Nienhusser & Espino, 2016; Muñoz & Vigil, 2018; Cervantes, Minero, & Brito, 2015). This is consistent with the findings from studies examining the theories of student retention and student engagement that will be explored next in this chapter.

Historical theories of student retention/engagement. The survey in this dissertation study includes questions and response choices that examine the current structures of support that are available to undocumented students in North Carolina Community Colleges, investigating any best practices that may exist based on theories of student engagement. To be properly informed by student engagement theories, it was important to examine the evolution of these theories. Early research has demonstrated the impact of interaction students have with faculty, on their persistence, success and achievement (Astin, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Tinto, 1993). Those early studies found students who engaged less with faculty and staff members felt less connected and were less satisfied with the college. One of the most commonly cited and most recognized theorists in student retention and post-secondary success is Vincent Tinto's (1993) model of student departure.

Tinto's (1975) original work extended earlier research by Spady (1970) and both drew from Emile Durkheim's (1951) work in sociology and social anthropology that examined suicide as a result of one's inability to establish membership in the communities within a society. Tinto applied the concept to the degree of social integration and academic integration a student may experience at an institution of higher education arising from longitudinal interactions with the members of the academic and social systems of that institution. He claimed that the more integrated a student was with the institution, the more likely they would persist to completion.

This model is limited because Tinto concentrated on traditional, white middle-class students at four-year institutions and largely neglected students from diverse backgrounds, (i.e. community college students, ethnic/racial minorities, first generation college students, or students from low socio-economic status backgrounds). Tinto's model has also been

criticized since it claimed that students must acquire the appropriate norms and behavioral patterns to become integrated into the institution, rather than holding deviant values which would lead to isolation (Tinto, 1993). This has been interpreted by critics to call for students to “lessen if not sever ties with their families and friends from the past, and they must adopt the values, norms, and behaviors that the institution of higher education deems appropriate in order to become a fully integrated member of the college” or put another way “students who fail to disassociate themselves from their home cultures and fail to assimilate to their respective college campus environments are less likely to persist.” (Falcone, 2011, p. 14).

Many researchers who have operationalized Tinto’s concepts of academic and social integration for their own research, have mistakenly captured information about student’s academic and social participation at an institution, focusing on the quantity, rather than the quality that reflects students’ psychological sense of integration. However, Spady’s (1970) original theory included an empirical definition of ‘perceived social integration’ that encompassed “student’s subjective sense of belonging and “fitting in” on campus, as well as students’ perceptions of warmth of their interpersonal relationships, and perceptions of feeling unpressured by “normative” differences between them and the college environment.” (Falcone, 2011, p. 22). Hurtado and Carter (1997) postulated the construct of “a sense of belonging” to better capture a student’s ‘perceived integration’ which “contains both cognitive and affective elements in an individual’s cognitive evaluation of his or her role in relation to the larger group” (Falcone, 2011, p. 23) Their research emphasizes that it is quality of student interactions with faculty and staff that are important, regardless of the number of interactions, so simply a high count of interactions does not signify that a student is well ‘integrated’.

When Tinto was interviewed by Wolf-Wendel and colleagues (2009) he also agreed that ‘integration’ is a problematic term, but that it was appropriate to use in the historical context when his original theory was created since it inferred the opposite of segregation or exclusion. He stated that he’d originally intended it to include “learning the rules of the game, the culture of the institution, and that one felt included and valued as a member of the college community” (p. 419). Tinto suggested that ‘sense of belonging’ should be used as a substitute since it carries the same intended meaning and explained, “Students need to feel connected in ways that do not marginalize or ghettoize. They need to feel welcomed not threatened” (p.419). Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) found institutional leadership could establish conditions that fostered increased positive interactions with students and institutional agents and encouraged them to do so as a way to engage students, enhance their sense of belonging and connectedness to the college, and increase their success along the college pathway.

Student engagement theory is important to this study, since undocumented students may feel like they do not belong. They may be an ethnic and cultural minority in addition to the stress they are under because of their status, and fear to disclose. If community college educators have negative attitudes toward undocumented students, then they are even less likely to feel welcome. This study will explore practices these community college educators in North Carolina may engage in to help undocumented students feel welcome and included in the campus community. One of the support strategies educators can utilize to assist undocumented students is to provide validation and this concept of validation that emerged from early student engagement theories will be explored next in this chapter.

Validation theory. Rendon's (1994) theory of validation has served as a framework for research on student persistence and seems easily applied to the support faculty and staff can provide for traditionally marginalized students. Rendon (1994) defined validation as "an enabling, confirming and supportive process initiated by in- and out-of-class agents that fosters academic and interpersonal development" (p. 44). Validation can be academic or interpersonal. Academic validation is defined as action that enabled students to "trust their innate capacity to learn and acquire confidence in being a college student" (p. 40) and interpersonal validation is defined as action that assisted students with "personal and social adjustment" (p. 42). Her theory of validation consists of six main elements:

- 1) Institutional agents should be responsible for initiating contact with students
- 2) When students experience validation, they feel capable of learning and have an increased self-worth
- 3) Validation is a pre-requisite to student development
- 4) Validation may occur in and out of class and promotes academic excellence and personal growth
- 5) Validation is a component of the developmental process, not an end result
- 6) Validation is especially important early in a student's college experience

Rendon also emphasized that educational institutions should create validating environments that were "intentional, proactive, and systematic" (p. 44). Rendon's original study (1994) found that validation from a faculty or staff member in the form of lending a helping hand to the student or doing something that affirmed for the student that they were capable of succeeding, was most influential in transforming the student's belief about themselves.

Rendon, Linares, and Muñoz (2011) explain that “when validation is present, students feel capable of learning and have a sense of self-worth” (p. 18). When faculty and staff take action to promote students’ personal development and social adjustment to the college, they provide students with interpersonal validation (Rendon, 1994). Falcone (2011) applied the theory of validation to Tinto’s original theory to assert that the college experiences a student has and the extent to which they are validating, impacts their perception of fit, or sense of belonging at the college, both academically and socially.

Barnett (2011) also used Rendon’s theory of validation as the framework for her study examining the impact of faculty-student interactions on academic integration and the extent to which academic integration determined student’s persistence. Findings revealed that faculty validation was a strong predictor of the students’ academic integration in college and caring instruction was the strongest influential factor. The qualitative coding of interview transcripts conducted with 30 Latinx students enrolled in developmental education courses in the Los Angeles area (Acevedo-Gil, Santos, Alonso, & Solorzano, 2015) revealed students enrolled at the same community college had experienced both validation and invalidation. When students described instances of invalidation, they reported negative effects that caused them to question their ability to complete, as opposed to those students who were able to describe the positive impact of the validation experiences they encountered, that strengthened their belief they could be successful in the course and in achieving their other academic goals.

An early limitation of validation theory as originally postulated, was the lack of application to multi-cultural student populations based on diverse identity factors such as race, ethnicity, sexuality, or immigrant status (Stebbleton & Aleixo, 2015). As her theory

continued to evolve and Rendon recognized culture as an integral part of the student's core identity that should be validated, she claimed that validation was especially important for non-traditional students from diverse backgrounds including low-socioeconomic and first generation and could have a major impact on the success for these students particularly (Rendon, 2002). Validation theory posits that when faculty and staff proactively offer assistance in a non-patronizing way that demonstrates recognition and respect of the student's culture, the students will see themselves as able to be successful. She explained that when the institutional culture seemed to oppose the student's cultural identity, the student felt marginalized and was not able to utilize the academic and student support services available, but when the student's culture was affirmed, the student was able to get involved and utilize available resources (Rendon, 2002). Students may experience the same situations very differently depending on a myriad of their own unique individual cultures and lived experience and therefore those that encounter what are validating experiences *for them* will have an increased sense of belonging to the college community (Falcone, 2011). In other words, the determining factor is whether students perceive academic and interpersonal validation.

Validation theory has been applied in multiple empirical studies over the last decade examining impact on traditionally marginalized student populations. Validation theory has been utilized by researchers to "better understand the success of underserved students, improve teaching and learning, understand student development in college, and frame college student success strategies" (Rendon Linares, & Munoz, 2011, p. 28). In a study conducted by Suarez (2003) that examined factors contributing to the successful transfer of Latinx community college students to four-year institutions, validation by faculty and staff was

commonly cited as a highly influential factor that encouraged students to persist in their programs. Similarly, Zhang and Ozuna (2015), in a study that focused on engineering students who successfully transferred from a community college to a four-year institution, identified faculty as the most important support for academic and interpersonal validation. Zhang (2016) conducted a study of international student community college participants and found that the validation or invalidation the students experienced from their college advisor was a central determinant of their success. It could be argued that they share similarities with the undocumented student population, since “they face unique obstacles when navigating higher education in the United States, often have lower self-efficacy, and are more likely to experience a higher level of social stress” (Zhang, 2016, p. 158).

In more recent application of the theory, some researchers have utilized Rendon’s validation theory (1994) as a lens through which to examine the impact institutional agents can have on the engagement and success of undocumented students. When faculty and staff engage in validating behaviors, the students feel noticed and empowered and it is more likely that learning will occur. When validation is absent undocumented students feel marginalized and isolated and are often disengaged from learning. Scholars have examined how faculty and staff can validate student’s cultural wealth and promote empowerment through recognition of their unique lived experience, especially for undocumented immigrant students who are often first-generation (Rendon Linares, & Munoz, 2011; Stebleton & Aleixo, 2015). Nuñez et al (2013) found *confianza* (trust) was a central construct in positive relationships with faculty and staff, and this was directly linked with the process of validation. Stebleton and Aleixo (2015) interviewed nine undocumented college students about their experiences and found that when students felt validated by faculty members and

institutional agents, they described a supportive environment, but others did not have a positive experience. Students recognized and discussed during their interviews, the value of those validating relationships that some faculty members and other institutional agents, including advisors and other staff, had built with them. A central outcome of the study as cited by the researchers was the impact and importance of the validating behaviors that faculty members and other institutional agents engaged in with the undocumented Latinx students. Students who described negative experiences of invalidation had been excluded from opportunities that could have provided future benefit and contributed to their academic career.

Validation will be a central construct that I will look for during the qualitative analysis in this study, to determine whether community college educators in North Carolina describe methods of validation they provide undocumented students. Since the positive impact to students from validation by faculty and staff has been clearly documented in other research studies, this study will aim to explore how and why community college educators engage in validation. This study may also uncover instances of invalidation undocumented students may have experienced from community college educators who have negative attitudes about their undocumented status. One research question will specifically study the contact educators have had with undocumented students and during analysis I will explore whether that contact has included instances of validation. I will examine how educators' knowledge and attitudes toward undocumented students may be impacted by their contact with students, as postulated by researchers of contact theory, which is described next in this chapter.

Contact theory- multicultural competence. Another foundational theory relevant to this body of research is Contact Theory, first developed by Allport (1954), which posits that contact between groups increased communication and interaction was inversely proportional to the development of stereotyping and negative attitudes. Ellison and Powers (1994) described the popular theory explaining that “contact, particularly close sustained contact, with members of different cultural groups promotes positive, tolerant attitudes” and that “by contrast, the absence of such contact is believed to foster stereotyping, prejudice and ill will toward these groups” (p. 385). The theory is based on attraction theory, which states that contact with groups of people different than oneself could enable them to discover that they have similar attitudes and values which will increase understanding and positive attitudes (Duck, 1977).

The Supreme Court Case, *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in 1954 and the subsequent decade of civil rights legislation, provided social scientists with many opportunities of testing the theory and examining the impact of contact on intergroup behavior and attitudes. The results from this body of research clearly demonstrated that it was not merely any contact between the members of diverse groups that would reduce prejudice but rather only certain kinds of contact (Duckitt, 1992). Allport (1958) amended his theory to specify the conditions of the contact that would reduce prejudice to involve “equal status contact between majority and minority groups in the pursuit of common goals...enhanced by institutional support and the sort that leads to the perception of common interests and common humanity between members of the two groups” (p. 276) Amir (1969) named five factors of the contact required to increase positive attitudes toward another group: that both groups have equal status, that contact should be interpersonal and not casual, that it

should be pleasant, that both groups should have collaborative goals for the contact, and that authorities and social norms should favor the intergroup contact.

In a meta-analysis of studies that altogether included 90,000 participants from 25 nations, Pettigrew and Troop (2000) found 94% showed an inverse relationship between contact and prejudice. Weaver (2007) analyzed the data collected through the General Social Survey administered in 2000 through the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago, which contained responses from 2,817 participants. The survey included items measuring social distance and stereotypes as well as items that measured contact between Hispanic and non-Hispanic whites. Jackman (1994) explained that due to the inherent struggles of measuring prejudice, researchers have commonly accepted the measurement of attitudinal elements- social distance and stereotypes- as manifestations of prejudice, which are more accessible to measure. Stereotypes are the cognitive component of racial attitudes, defined by Schaefer (1995) as “exaggerated images of the characteristics of a particular group” (p.19). Bogardus (1933) defined social distance as “the degree of sympathetic understanding that functions between person and person, between person and group, and between groups” (p. 7). Weaver’s analysis revealed that social distance was reduced for respondents who indicated any close contact with Hispanics and that higher levels of contact with Hispanics was correlated with low amounts of prejudice toward them. He suggested then that “it is almost certain that the prejudice between them will decrease as contact continues to increase” (p. 272).

In their study of educators’ cross-cultural competence levels (Lopes-Murphy & Murphy, 2016) researchers found that educators who had a greater frequency of interaction with individuals from diverse cultures were more culturally competent. They also reported

that in-service teachers who had more opportunities to interact with members of diverse cultures were more culturally competent than pre-service teachers who had limited exposure. A recommendation that arose from their study was the necessity for a greater amount and intensity of cross-cultural training in areas with less diverse populations, where it is less likely that interactions will occur naturally.

This practice of cultural competency training has its roots in the theory of multicultural competence. The theory was first developed within the field of counseling and described the awareness, knowledge and skills counselors needed to work with a diverse range of clients (Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992). In the mid 1990's the student affairs division of the field of higher education adopted multicultural practices as a "more thoughtful, deliberate and integrated approach...to enhance equity and inclusion on campuses" (Pope et al., 2009, p.647). Multicultural competence consists of multicultural awareness, knowledge, and skills (Pope & Reynolds, 1997). Multicultural awareness encompasses attitudes, beliefs, values, assumptions, and self-awareness. Multicultural knowledge refers to the information about diverse cultures, and multicultural skills are the abilities needed to work with diverse cultures. Yet when applied in higher education contexts, traditionally the focus has been limited to increasing educators' knowledge of particular cultural differences, often viewed as limitations, with a goal of helping them assimilate to the institutional culture.

Tierney (1999) emphasizes the inherent problems with this theory that places full responsibility on the student, who is expected to assimilate to the institution, and in contrast Tierney asserts that the institutions must honor and adapt to accommodate students' cultural differences, becoming "democratic spheres of opportunity" (Falcone, 2011, p. 15). Tierney

instead posits that when students' cultural backgrounds are affirmed by the institution, this supportive environment empowers them to succeed. Tanaka (2002) similarly called for institutions to practice inter-culturalism, a term she defined as "a process of learning and sharing across difference where no one culture dominates" and that encouraged each student to have a voice and to tell their individual story. Both Tierney and Tanaka encourage educators to adopt an assets-based view of the students they work with, in which students are not seen as deficient or as a problem the institution must deal with, but rather as valued members of the institution.

This study will explore types of contact community college educators in North Carolina may have with undocumented students and whether they perceive it has had any impact on the knowledge, understanding and attitudes they possess toward this student population. The survey will ask them about the contact they've had with undocumented students or also undocumented immigrants in general. The interview will also provide participants an opportunity to explain their perception of how they have developed their attitudes toward undocumented students and if they have changed over time. During analysis of the data gathered during the interview process in this study I will make note of any instances where participants describe contact as an influential factor in the development of their attitudes or the knowledge they have gained. The concept of interculturalism will also inform analysis as I explore the assets-based view of undocumented students held by Dreambuilders. This strengths-based view of diverse student populations has been an important factor in educators' ability to help students be successful but is often neglected even in well-intentioned professional development. Critical Race Theorists have critiqued

traditional methods of professional development sessions which too often focus on students' shortcomings as described next in this chapter.

Critique informed by critical race theorists. Critical race theorists criticize traditional cultural competency training as it too often consists of altruistic intentions of examining achievement gaps and attempts to implement strategies to assist students from under-represented groups who are succeeding at lower rates than the dominant population. The solutions generated are often aimed at addressing perceived shortcomings within the student population due to disadvantaged backgrounds, low educational aspirations, or conflicting responsibilities (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Wise, 2008). Not only are these solutions ineffective, they also perpetuate racist ideologies by ignoring or even denying the marginalization embedded within institutional systems. Delgado and Stefancic (2001) explain that racism is often so common and pervasive that it is invisible, and that invisibility helps to maintain it. They assert that generally racism in education is not due to explicit beliefs in White superiority but rather a lack of knowledge and racial awareness. Critical race theorists suggest then that education and training that moves beyond traditional skill-based competencies toward acknowledging and helping to illuminate systemic issues that oppress marginalized student groups, can be beneficial in increasing racial awareness among institutional agents. Harrell (2000) described 'vicarious racism' which involved "witnessing or hearing about another person's or group's experience with racial discrimination", as a means through which White institutional agents could increase their awareness of the reality of racism within their institutional context (p. 45 as cited in Diggles, 2014).

King and Baxter Magolda (2005) encourage educators to move beyond traditional multiculturalism competencies toward the development of critical consciousness and intercultural maturity which they define as “multi-dimensional and consisting of a range of attributes, including understanding (the cognitive dimension), sensitivity to others (the interpersonal dimension) and a sense of oneself that enables one to listen to and learn from others (the intrapersonal dimension) (p. 574). Critical consciousness has been defined as “an awareness of how institutional, hierarchal, and systemic forces limit and promote the life opportunities for particular groups” (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2002, p.87, as cited by Rojas, 2014). When faculty and staff effectively demonstrate multicultural competence it can lead first order change movements which are content driven, enhancing the awareness and knowledge of others toward diverse cultural groups (Pope, Reynolds, & Mueller, 2014). Stanton-Salazar (2011) used the term ‘empowerment agents’, defined as institutional agents who confront inequity and help students and colleagues develop critical consciousness (Stanton-Salazar, 2011).

Yosso (2005) used critical race theory as her lens to challenge traditional cultural capital theories (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) which interpreted educational success across cultural groups by normalizing the practice and knowledge of the middle class as ‘cultural capital’ that minority groups should attempt to obtain. Yosso (2005) criticized the theory for failing to recognize what she named ‘community cultural wealth’ and defined as the knowledge, skills, and abilities all students bring to the institutional context that students from marginalized populations have accumulated through their lived experience and use to navigate the educational context. She described six forms of this cultural capital, aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational and resistant. She defined aspirational capital as “the

ability to hold onto hope in the face of structured inequality and often without the means to make such dreams a reality” (p.77). Linguistic capital refers to “intellectual and social skills attained through communication experiences in more than one language” (p.78). Yosso described familial capital as the cultural knowledge from family and community, and social capital as that from “peer and other social contacts” that “can provide both instrumental and emotional support to navigate the institution” (p.79). Navigational capital encompasses the skills to successfully maneuver through the educational institution and resistant capital includes the knowledge and skills gained through the oppositional behavior that challenges inequality p. 80).

CRT and specifically Yosso’s (2005) theory of community cultural wealth helps to move beyond simply the typical view of the barriers faced by this student population, to emphasize the strengths these students possess from the cultural wealth in their families and communities and the resilience they have demonstrated to gain access to the dominant structures of post-secondary education and continue to persist despite the challenges. During interviews conducted by Chen and Rhoads (2016) educational administrators discussed the positive impact that students are now having on educator’s acceptance and attitudes towards even the broader issue of immigration. They explain that the student voices have “humanized the whole thing” and that since they’re now “dealing with a student and a face. Now we’re really talking about a human being” (p. 527). Several allies in their study cited the growing student visibility and activism as factors in their increased support for the undocumented students on their campus. This has helped to counteract anti-immigrant discourse by challenging the stereotypes that are often used as central constructs in the racist nativist arguments described next in this chapter.

In contrast: racist nativism in society. This topic of undocumented students and the extent to which institutions can and should be serving them, is a deeply racialized issue and many faculty and staff on both sides of the issue, whether allies or opposed, often equate undocumented with Latinx as if they're inseparable terms. Huber (2010) defined racist nativism as “the assigning of values to real or imagined differences in order to justify the superiority of the native, who is perceived to be white, over that of the non-native who is perceived to be People and Immigrants of Color, and thereby defend the native’s right to dominance” (p.81). This theoretical construct is borne from the conceptual frameworks of CRT and LatCrit applied in collaboration to the merged constructs of racism and nativism present in the anti-immigrant discourse. Solorzano, Allen, and Carrol (2002) describe two central components of racism including 1) one group that believes itself superior to other groups, and 2) the group that believes itself superior has the power to carry out racist behavior, an institutional power that People of Color have never possessed. Huber (2010) builds on the research by Galindo and Vigil (2006) to describe the three fundamental elements of nativism, 1) the intense opposition to the “foreigner”, which 2) creates the defense and protection of a nationalistic identity, where 3) the foreigner becomes a perceived threat to that identity (p.80).

The early research defining the concept of nativism, conducted by Higham (1955) still seems relevant today, when considering the rejection of the undocumented students by a significant portion of the American population, including some of the faculty and staff across higher education institutions. Higham (1955) defined nativism as the “intense opposition to an internal minority on the grounds of it’s foreign (i.e. ‘un-American’) connections (p.4). He explained that white superiority was used to justify the belief that “the United States belongs

in some special sense to the Anglo-Saxon race” (p.9). Just as racist nativism policies have historically marginalized undocumented immigrants from full participation and privileges in U.S. society, policies at the state and institutional level prevent undocumented students from accessing state and federal resources and in some states, from accessing college entirely, as exclusionary policies have been implemented forbidding admission. Valenzuela et al (2015) described processes that “stigmatize students by not recognizing their unique circumstances in institutional policies or procedures to validate their presence” (p.89). Allies to the undocumented student population often confront these racist nativist beliefs as they seek to raise awareness among their colleagues and practice transformational resistance as described next in this chapter.

Models of transformational resistance- development of allies. Helms and Carter (1990) created a model of white identity development including six stages of contact, disintegration, reintegration, pseudo-independent, immersion/emersion and autonomy with a goal of abandoning individual racism and opposing systemic racial oppression. Whites move from the contact stage characterized by color blindness and meritocracy to the disintegration stage, when they encounter dissonance caused by exposure to white privilege and may react to the guilt and shame they feel with anger and defensiveness pushing them to reintegrate. Those who continue their development of unlearning racism enter the pseudo-independent stage where they are beginning to operate as an ally but may want to rescue the group rather than partner and collaborate. Edwards (2006) explained that many white faculty and staff are in this stage and adopt a helping model rather than empowering the students of color they’re working with. Those that continue to develop and move into the immersion stage, shift their efforts from trying to change people of color by helping them address shortcomings and

assimilate to the expected culture, to trying to change other whites and the systems that privilege them. Finally, in the autonomy stage, energy is directed toward opposition to oppression in conjunction with other allies.

Broido (2000) defined allies for social justice as “members of dominant groups who are working to end the system of oppression that gives them greater privilege and power based on their social-group membership” (p.3). Edwards (2006) explained that social justice allies collaborate with members of oppressed groups and are motivated by both personal and group liberation from oppression, and see themselves as allies to the issue, rather than to particular individuals. Edwards contrasted this with allies who are motivated by altruism, acting as helper to the victims that actually sustains personal power and privilege, similar to the pseudo-independent stage in Helm’s model.

A common factor cited in the studies of the ally development process, was exposure to difference, but especially if there were also opportunities provided for “reflection, emotional connection, and meaning making” (Young-Law, 2012). Yet little research exists about the important role that faculty and staff may play as institutional agents of social transformation. Solorzano and Delgado Bernal (2001) describe the theoretical construct of transformational resistance. From Solorzano and Delgado Bernal this theoretical construct focuses on how institutional agents can serve in the role of ally for the students and engage in advocacy, involving a critique of social oppression and a commitment to social justice. They developed a four-quadrant typology as displayed in Figure 1 that can be used to identify the extent to which educators are prepared to engage in transformational resistance. They argue that “transformational resistance offers the greatest possibility for social change” (p.319) It is when educators are both committed to social justice and actively engaged in the critique of

oppression that they are engaged in transformational resistance. As displayed below, if they are committed to social justice but not willing to critique oppression than they are conformist, and if they do critique oppression but are not committed to social justice than their resistance is self-defeating. For the purposes of this study it is when community college educators are both committed to facilitating change in their institutions that removes the barriers undocumented students face and are actively engaging in dialogue with colleagues that critiques the systems designed to oppress this student population, that they are engaging in transformational resistance.

	No critique of oppression	Critique of oppression
No Commitment to Social Justice	Reactionary Behavior	Self-defeating resistance
Commitment to Social Justice	Conformist Resistance	Transformational Resistance

Figure 1. Diagram of social justice advocacy and components of transformational resistance

Rhoads and Black (1995) studied student affairs practitioners as transformative educators and described the risks these practitioners take to challenge inequitable practices, policies and structures. Chen and Rhoads (2016) applied this concept of transformative educator to the faculty and staff who advocate for undocumented students and speak out against ‘Western triumphalism’. Hu-DeHart (1993) described Western triumphalism as a vision of US history and the claim to legitimate citizenship in White Eurocentric terms, at the exclusion of minority populations. Chen and Rhoads (2016) described the work of

undocumented student allies contesting those exclusionary claims to citizenship, based on racism and xenophobia. Chen and Rhoads defined this advocacy as transformational resistance.

Gildersleeve and Ranero (2010) emphasize the power faculty members and other higher education professionals have as potential agents of change, if they become social justice advocates on behalf of undocumented students. It's important to note the sensitivity of these issues and the risks that faculty and staff take when engaging in transformational resistance. It's imperative that this be considered in any future studies with regards to protection of identity of research participants as well as the limitations this could impose upon participant's willingness to be completely transparent in the data they share about their acts of resistance and even potentially their role of ally. Lahman, Mendoza, Rodriguez, and Schwartz (2011) speak to the awareness that is necessary of these ethical challenges and the cautions researchers must take especially during this time of fear and monitored surveillance for DREAMers.

Institutional undocu-competence. Valenzuela, Perez, Perez, Montiel & Chaparro (2015) have proposed the theoretical framework of Institutional Undocu-Competence (IUC) to examine how well community colleges are serving the undocumented students enrolled at their institution. IUC was developed from a critique of cultural competence through a lens of social justice framework which demands that institutions move beyond promoting awareness of diversity to take action to improve equity for undocumented students. IUC involves providing undocumented students with all available resources proactively. Valenzuela et. al (2015) emphasize the need for faculty and staff training, to increase understanding of the unique circumstances of the sociopolitical context of the undocumented

students' lives. They assert that this training should focus on the contributions of the undocumented student population, their resilience and their rights, human and legal. Nienhusser and Espino (2016) have proposed a very similar theoretical construct of undocumented/DACAmented status competency (UDSC) as "institutional agents' awareness, knowledge, and skills related to addressing undocumented/DACAmented students' needs" and involves the process of engaging in that practice. These theories are practically identical and so I mention both here as theories that support one another, as opposed to trying to elaborate on any differences.

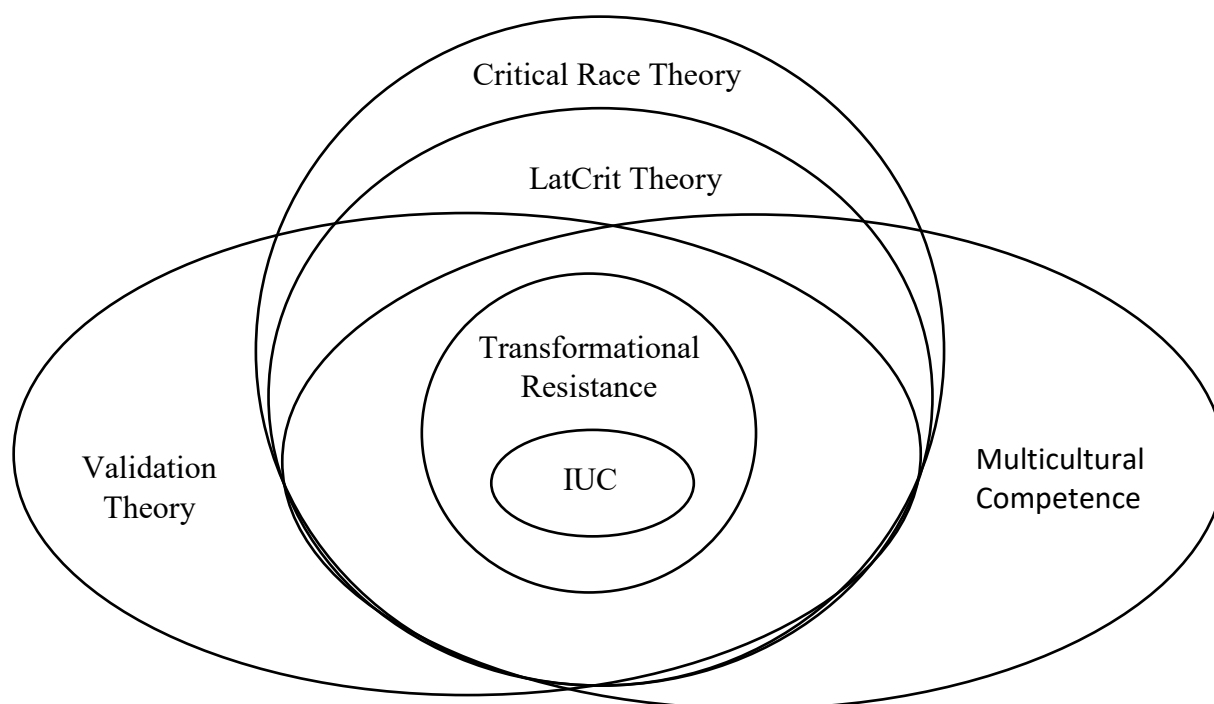
At a recent Achieving the Dream conference, community college practitioners presented strategies they have implemented to build institutional undocu-competence and support undocumented students on their campus. It is extremely difficult for undocumented students to know who they can trust enough to disclose their status since doing so carries incredible risk and stigma. That theme has repeatedly emerged from previous qualitative studies nationally and interviews they have conducted themselves with undocumented students on their campus. So, they have created Undocu-Ally signs that they have posted in highly visible places on campus and within each Ally's office. This is an example of one of the best practices community colleges can implement to support undocumented students, visible advocacy. Valenzuela et al (2015) concluded that institutions can foster engagement and thus success of their undocumented students by creating IUC networks across the campus, recognizing allies and advocates and providing training for all faculty and staff, thus reducing the perceived stigma associated with their status.

This study will explore whether participants have an understanding of the community cultural wealth undocumented students possess. It will explore through survey and interview

questions, whether Dreambuilders have encountered experiences of ‘student voices’ opportunities to hear student perspective on this issue and the challenges they personally face. Alternatively, analysis of survey responses from those with less favorable attitudes will reveal whether they have had any opportunities to connect with individual undocumented students or any exposure to students sharing their stories. Both the survey and interviews in this study will also ask participants to identify ways in which they have acted as empowerment agents.

Figure 2 provides a visual demonstration of the overlapping theories that were foundational to this study and suggests how each of these theories integrated with one another and informed the study design, data collection, and analysis. I utilized methodology inspired by LatCrit, which emerged from the underlying CRT principles, challenging the injustice that undocumented students confront within the community college system, by focusing on ‘empowerment agents’, faculty and staff who provide valuable validation and support. This validation and support has been proven by researchers of validation theory to be an influential factor in students’ success and retention. This study collects data from these faculty and staff participants who have a high degree of multi-cultural competence, and have engaged in transformational resistance, which has contributed to their development of individual undocu-competence (IUC).

Figure 2. Conceptual framework



Major Trends in Contemporary Scholarship

Despite the rapid growth of the immigrant population within North Carolina, very little empirical research exists about their inclusion in higher education within the state. Within the past decade there has been such volatile paradoxical mayhem within the political and legislative environments that students and their families have suffered through emotional upheaval, as their hopes are raised only to be dashed again to have to continue living in fear (Muñoz & Vigil, 2018). Contemporary scholars have attempted to capture these political changes and some of the factors or influences involved, as they have analyzed discourse and attitudes within the general public (Falcone, 2011; Palmer & Davidson, 2011). There has

been scholarly research conducted on the reviews of the political policies, laws that have passed at the state and federal level, and the impact to members of the increasing undocumented immigrant population (Valenzuela, Perez, Perez, Montiel & Chaparro, 2015). These researchers have investigated the action a handful of states have taken since in the absence of federal policy, it has been left to the discretion of the states on whether to create supportive or subtractive policy. The lack of federal immigration law has resulted in a myriad of state laws that vary dramatically as some states have adopted supportive policies, extending benefits such as eligibility for driver's license, student loans and professional licenses and other states have adopted policies that are restrictive, denying barring healthcare services and admission to educational institutions.

Other scholars have adopted a LatCrit lens and provided voice to the systemic barriers that Dreamers face, mainly to accessing college, through case studies, interviews and a handful of focus groups with the members of this student population (Stebbleton & Aleixo, 2015; Chen & Rhoads, 2016). Although still in its infancy, there is also a growing body of research within the last three years which adopts a more strengths-based approach, exploring the concept of cultural capital (Yosso, 2005) and how that can positively impact students' experience. These researchers have provided voice to this marginalized population through the construction of counter-narratives, that reveal unquestioned power systems, normative behavior expectations and other hidden barriers for first generation, low income, Latinx students (Pyne & Means, 2013; Chen & Rhoads, 2016). They have explored the invisibility of the impact of color-blind meritocracy, and how deeply embedded those ideals, even altruistic ones are within educational institutions. For instance, the achievement gap should be understood and easily attributed to historic systemic neglect of the oppressed population

by the educational institution. Instead it is almost unanimously interpreted as a quantitative indicator of the deficits in the student population that lags behind. To address this misnomer, Ladson-Billings (2006) refers instead to “educational debt” which she defines as “a decades long accumulation of denied access to education and employment reinforced by deepening poverty and resource inequalities in schools that continue to leave children of color, bilingual children, and the poor behind” (Debro, 2012, p.16). Even in those states, that have enacted tuition equity policies and where there are considerable efforts at least at some institutions to be inclusive of undocumented students, there is still a considerable achievement gap and there are many students who even with access to college, do not succeed.

In a meta-analysis of studies regarding attitudes towards immigration, it appears the majority of national polls indicate the American public is opposed both to increasing levels of immigrants in the United States and to their access of public benefits (Berg, 2009). Research on attitudes towards immigration have found that there is a perception of immigrants as an economic and cultural threat (Fennelly & Frederico, 2008) that affects opinions about immigrant access to public services (Garcia & Bass, 2007). Even ignoring for a moment the social justice implications and the instant negative associations that the term ‘illegal’ carries, with all the negative impact on the person labeled in such a way, some scholars argue that the term, ‘illegal’ is actually inaccurate. The 14th Amendment affirms that no government may “deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws (U.S. Constitution, am. XIV). Although an undocumented immigrant has violated the immigration requirements when coming to the United States, once they have established residence within the United States, they are living within the jurisdiction of the United States and thus should be afforded the same civil and legal rights (Head, 2009).

The counter-immigrant movement (anti-immigrant radicals) have heavily utilized the term ‘illegal’ and racialized discourse. Faculty and staff interviewed by Chen and Rhoads (2016) described the impact of the narrative from the Minuteman of “an invasion from the south by the barbarians at the gate, the undesirables” (p.528) and the negative impact they’d observed on their colleagues, in terms of their willingness to support the undocumented students at their institution. They provide an example of a brief letter to the editor that was published in Chapel Hill News, in which the term ‘illegal’ was used 10 times. This was a letter from an anti-immigrant group, and was not endorsed by the university publication, but nevertheless was still published and could be assumed to have been read by a large percentage of the faculty, staff, and students, thus potentially having a profound negative impact on their perception of the issue. Worse, in January 2017, the Community College Review published a blog entitled “Should illegal immigrants qualify for in-state tuition” (Chen, 2017) that included the word ‘illegal’ in the title and 19 times within the text. Haas (2004) discussed the dangers of obtaining information from the popular news, where too often the ‘experts’ selected to speak on a controversial topic were told ‘what to think’ as opposed to ‘what to think about’. Within current public discourse, xenophobia and hostility are openly expressed toward immigrants without any apparent concern of social sanction (De la Torre, 2016). Federal laws have been aggressively enforced leading to public displays of detention and deportation, separating families and creating a culture of fear.

In an analysis by Lopez (2015) of arguments against and for the passage of the DREAM act, two themes emerged from opponents of the DREAM act: that it would provide undocumented immigrants benefits over Americans, and that it would increase illegal immigration, both of which seemed to be based on racist and nativist ideologies. Barron

(2011) listed the arguments against the DREAM act, as “a back door amnesty that will reward violation of immigration laws, encourage chain migration and exponential population growth, and transfer seats and tuition subsidies to illegal aliens” (p.624). Researchers have provided clear evidence to the contrary of each of these arguments and yet they persist. Connolly (2005) pointed to the criteria in the legislation that required entrance to the United States before the age of 16 and at least five years at the time the legislation was enacted. It would provide very little incentive then for additional immigrants to enter without documentation since it would not be possible for them to meet the criteria. Olivas (2004) explained how the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigration Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) prevented undocumented students from receiving any benefits that a citizen would not be entitled to, thus negating the argument that they would ‘take anything away’ from citizens. Connolly (2005) provided a counter argument to those opponents who argued against it because it would “reward illegal behavior” (p. 214) since it would actually be the children who were benefiting, who had no choice in migrating to the United States, and who, to use the opponents’ language, had ‘committed no crime’. She also provided evidence against the other popular argument that since undocumented immigrants “do not pay taxes” they “should not receive benefits paid for with tax revenue” (p.215) and explained that they actually do pay taxes and that passing the DREAM act would increase tax revenue not decrease it.

Even the arguments used by supporters of the DREAM act seem to reflect racist nativist beliefs, that since many undocumented students have been raised in the United States and have received their education in American schools, their identities are actually much more “American” than their own cultural background (Lopez, 2015) Indeed, in recent studies, the faculty and staff who serve as allies have described the delicate balance of

consciousness raising while also being cautious of attracting too much of the wrong kind of attention, which could put the students who have risked disclosing their status in jeopardy (Chen & Rhoads, 2016). They aim to protect them by emphasizing that they are assimilated to American culture and call America home. Recent research examining the receptivity of the campus environments to undocumented students has found mixed results. Some institutional agents exhibit transformational resistance and take risks to actively advocate for DREAMers while others described a hostile environment and heated exchanges among colleagues who expressed very negative sentiments towards the undocumented student population (Chen & Rhoads, 2016). Allies discussed the consciousness raising activities and programs they conducted helping to raise awareness among colleagues who were unaware of students' legal status at their own university. In this study I will explore any transformational resistance activities that participants may engage in at their particular institutions or within the larger North Carolina community college system.

Fear has constantly shown up in the interview transcripts and other qualitative research with undocumented high school and college students (Albrecht, 2007). Some scholars note that these students experience feelings of being 'hunted' and this fear and distrust leads to anger, hopelessness, and depression (Suarez-Orozco, 2001; Lopez, 2010). Polls show that just over half of all Latinx adults in the U.S. live with the fear that they themselves, a family member, or a close friend could be deported and nearly two thirds agree that the failure of Congress to pass legislation enacting immigration reform has made life more difficult for all Latinxs (Pew Hispanic Center, 2009). Others have noted that student affairs professionals in higher education need to be aware that these students struggle with feelings of "shame, trepidation, anger, despair, marginalization, and uncertainty" that are

“derived from experiences of discrimination, anti-immigrant sentiment, fear of deportation, and systemic barriers such as ineligibility for college financial assistance” (Perez, Cortes, Ramos, & Coronado, 2010). In a survey of undocumented undergraduates (Teranishi, Suarez-Orozco, & Suarez-Orozco, 2015) respondents reported a much higher level of anxiety than a matching sample from the general population. In fact, 28.5% of males and 36.7% of females reported a higher level than the clinical cut-off for generalized anxiety disorder, compared to four percent of males and nine percent of females from the general population. Respondents expressed fear of deportation and although respondents who were DACA recipients did indicate reduced levels of shame since they could be open about their status, 90% of them reported worrying about the deportation or detention of friends and family.

In the interviews Stebleton and Aleixo (2015) conducted with nine undocumented college students about their college experiences, students described the challenge of deciding who they could trust with their personal stories including the disclosure of their undocumented status. They conveyed a sense of ongoing fear and anxiety that they would be ‘found out or discovered’ (p.263). They explained that it was difficult to know who they could trust since they didn’t know where instructors and advisors stood on the issue of immigration and whether they would be accepted or rejected. Many of the students discussed feeling vulnerable at the institution and so as a result Stebleton and Aleixo (2015) describe the students as “literally living in the shadows as they attempted to navigate an unfamiliar, massive bureaucratic organization” (p.267). The relationships some students established with faculty and staff, were based on a trial and error process, and some of their experiences with non-supportive staff left them feeling “dejected and marginalized” (p.268). These students entered the college institution with higher hopes for support from faculty and staff and

expressed surprise and disappointment that the campus climate was not welcoming of their undocumented student status.

Nienhusser and Espino (2016) conducted 45 interviews with institutional agents exploring the construct they developed and named Undocumented/DACAmented Status Competency (UDSC). The institutional agents were selected from community colleges in the states of California, Connecticut, Georgia, and Wisconsin and several key themes were discovered about the practitioner's awareness of student needs, the skills they used to work with the students, and the opportunities they'd had to gain those knowledge and skills. One of the interviewees shared an important insight through a Spanish saying, "ojos que no ven, corazon que no siente" (p.7) (English translation: what the eyes can't see the heart can't feel) explaining that many of their colleagues were still unaware of the needs of undocumented students since the issue is still largely out of sight on campus. With regards to how educators had gained awareness, another interviewee shared that "personal relationships and interactions with undocumented/DACAmented students" helped to "break down a barrier instead of just a concept" and developed their "cultural and contextual understanding" (p. 8-9). When interviewees were asked about the skills they needed to work with undocumented students, the majority mentioned the importance of multicultural competence, empathy towards their stories and their situations, and an understanding of the policies that affect them including eligibility for postsecondary education benefits.

Pratt (1991) described the potential of higher education to be a 'contact zone', "a creative generative space that deliberately engages issues of power in order to create culturally integrated spaces that value diverse experiences and ways of knowing and learning" (Pyne & Means, 2013, p.187). Roithmayr (1999) also recognized the classroom as

the “central site for the construction of social and racial power” since it is the place “where knowledge is constructed, organized, produced and distributed” (p.5) But Anzaldua (1999) used the term ‘borderland’ “a social space created and defined in Anglocentric terms, historically characterized by exclusions and silences for those who have been marginalized, yet with the potential to also inspire a rich and multi-voiced sense of self” (also cited in Delgado Bernal, 2002).

Most recent research, especially that which has been generated by researchers through a critical race or LatCrit lens has found that higher education still often denies or represses the multiple identities and lived experience of those students who are underrepresented, causing them to feel vulnerable, as if they’re outsiders or imposters. Community colleges serve as the primary gateway to higher education for undocumented students due to the lower tuition and yet there are still very few studies that have examined how community colleges can build capacity to support the success and completion of undocumented students (Chen, 2013). By asking participants who identify as allies for undocumented students to explain how they’ve gained the knowledge and favorable attitudes that enable them to engage in practices that increase the success and completion of undocumented students at their institution, this study may reveal strategies that NC Community Colleges can implement to build capacity among a greater number of educators.

Researchers that have focused exclusively on Latinx college student populations have confirmed the importance of positive interactions students had with faculty and staff. Faculty interaction and support has consistently been cited as an important factor contributing to the success of Latinx students (Cole & Espinoza, 2008). Anaya and Cole (2001) found correlations with the frequency and quality of those interactions on improved positive

academic performance. Oseguera, Locke, and Vega (2009) discussed the importance of having strong institutional agents who proactively established connection with Latinx student populations to offer support, especially since so many were first-generation. Rendon and Valadez (1993) discovered that many Latinx students perceived faculty did not understand their unique needs and issues. The study conducted by Stebleton, Soria, Aleixo, and Huesman (2012) which administered the Student Experience in the Research University (SERU) inventory to 58,000 students from six research universities had similar findings. There were significant differences in the students' responses to items regarding their sense of belonging, interactions with faculty and interactions with peers, based on whether they were immigrant or non-immigrant students.

Strengths and Gaps in Scholarship and Implications for this Study

There is a stronger body of knowledge that has been produced within the last six years, than previously, when it seemed that many researchers were fearful to even touch the subject. In that regard, the literature base and body of scholarship seems to be growing. There have been a greater number of studies examining the K-12 environment and strategies that counselors and others can put in place to support these students. Some studies have come from the field of social work and counseling, focused on how to help children navigate the emotions they experience living in fear within this politically charged environment. However, there is still a gap and a lack of research about strategies post-secondary institutions can implement to help these students. A recent search found only one article that had been published describing a study examining the role of 'allies' for DREAMers in a four year university in California. This study explored how individual faculty and staff members

moved beyond the boundaries of their role as institutional agents and engaged in transformational resistance. The researchers adopted a critical race lens to investigate the topic.

While it is positive that there has now been at least one study to examine the development and supportive role of allies this could look very different in the institutional context of a community college, or within the dramatically different political landscapes of each state within which the institution operates. Lopez (2010) emphasized the power of counterstories to define undocumented students as valuable, contributing members of society, who deserve more equitable treatment including the public benefits of higher education. Critical race scholars have recognized the need to reconceptualize the “illegality” of students who are victims of a broken immigration system. This requires a paradigmatic shift from the deficit view of these students as “illegal” to one that recognizes their value and capability. Extended Contact Theory suggests that the greater the number of opportunities a person has to interact with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds different than their own, the more likely they are to develop positive attitudes towards immigrants (Fennelly, & Frederico, 2008). Yet, little research exists within the community college setting investigating the impact of contact on educational practitioners, through deliberate increased exposure to undocumented students, to determine whether this does indeed improve attitudes toward the student population.

It is reasonable to assume, given the career choice faculty and staff have made as community college educators, to dedicate their lives to educating students who often whom come from less advantaged backgrounds, that they would advocate for equitable education for all students. It’s likely then that there is no mal intent, but rather that a lack of knowledge

could certainly impact the attitude that faculty and staff may carry. Yet there have been few studies which have focused on this topic. While there have now been a handful of studies considering the impact of allies, educators that support these students in a higher education setting, from the student perspective, additional research should be conducted exploring the knowledge faculty and staff have of this student population, examining their awareness of the barriers that the growing body of research has uncovered, or perhaps more importantly their resilience despite these barriers. Educators should seek to understand the students they teach but research is lacking on strategies institutions could implement to help convey knowledge to the faculty and staff they employ. Perhaps by studying how current faculty and staff who do support these students, have acquired the knowledge they now possess, the results of this study may inform practices that can be used to educate additional faculty and staff across North Carolina and beyond.

Within the past two years researchers have defined the term Institutional Undocu-Competence (IUC) as a framework for assessing how well institutions are serving this student population (Valenzuela, Perez, Perez, Montiel, & Chaparro, 2015). This study will focus on the participants' lived experience as a source of data that when analyzed can inform how they gained "individual undocu-competence" and when shared may contribute to efforts to establish environments where DREAMers are increasingly able to be successful.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Purpose of the Study

As a researcher, I am a pragmatic pluralist who believes that research is valuable in terms of its degree of usefulness, the ability to inform what can and perhaps should be done, and how to change things for the better. I also feel very strongly that research can and should serve multiple purposes. On one hand, it should provide an understanding of current phenomena, educational problems, situations, and contexts, and yet on the other it should aim to provide workable solutions to the problems that are uncovered.

Aligned with my pragmatic view, I believe the approach that should be taken is that which is best suited to the purpose of the particular research and the nature of the research question. I believe that all methods can and should be used that are helpful to research an issue and gain new information to solve a problem (Creswell, 2005). Whether one chooses to argue that undocumented students should be provided the opportunity to pursue their education, or whether they should choose to argue the opposite, that undocumented students should be excluded from higher education institutions, it cannot be denied that it is currently a problem that needs to be solved.

As described in Chapter 2, the foundation of this study arises from the broad conceptual framework of CRT with a commitment to social justice, that all students, including undocumented students should be entitled to pursue higher education and have equitable opportunities to succeed. Advocating for social justice requires searching for ways to create space for dialogue. This study aims to provide stimulus for that dialogue as it surveys community college educators across North Carolina to assess the current levels of

knowledge and attitudes they possess, and any validation and support strategies they provide for undocumented students. Shields (2006) expands upon Bakhtin's (1973) perspective on dialogue to explain her point—it is not about deciding who is right or which position is best but rather it is about truly listening to one another through interaction and mutual reflection of all voices. Shields emphasizes that “One voice is not capable of telling the truth” (p. 111) and that “the conversations are not always easy, but they are necessary” (p. 113). It is often through reflection, both individual and institutional, that one can become aware of opportunities for growth. The survey items were designed to require participants to reflect on their own knowledge and attitudes about the undocumented student population, and how they came to develop those attitudes or obtain that knowledge. As those responses are later shared with institutional leaders across the North Carolina Community College system, it will also provide an opportunity for institutional reflection on both what processes are currently available, and perhaps what steps can be taken to advance the knowledge and attitudes of faculty and staff at their institutions, comprehensively.

Design of the Study and Rationale

Mixed Methods Research. The research design I used in this study employed a mixed methods approach. I chose mixed methods for this research project because of the enhanced understanding it provided making the results more useful. Greene, Kreider, and Mayer (Somekh & Lewin, 2005, p. 275) described these types of understanding as

- 1) understanding with more validity through triangulation
- 2) understanding comprehensively through incorporation of multiple perspectives
- 3) understanding with greater insight, through new ideas and reframing

4) understanding with greater diversity through inclusion of different values

Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) also described why mixed methods research is best for pragmatic purposes: “it is inclusive, pluralistic, and complementary, and it suggests that researchers take an eclectic approach to method selection...(that) should follow research questions in a way that offers the best chance to obtain useful answers” (p.18). Quantitative and qualitative research methods each provide a different lens with which a particular phenomenon can be studied.

Mixed methods studies may include different types of organizational design. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) recommend that “research approaches should be mixed in ways that offer the best opportunities for answering important research questions” (p. 16). For this study I adopted an integrated approach, in which all methods involved were of equal importance and could shape the use of each other. The survey design included items that collected both quantitative and qualitative data and were analyzed as such, with scaled items quantitatively computed, and open-ended response items coded qualitatively. The design of this study enabled triangulation of responses between phases, through the separate analysis of survey and interview data (Creswell, 2005). For instance, since faculty, staff, and administrators at multiple community colleges were surveyed and a small number of those respondents were interviewed, the themes uncovered during interviews helped to shape the survey analysis, and the results obtained through the survey also shaped the guided interview questions, and the coded analysis of the interviewees’ responses. The findings were presented here in two separate chapters to demonstrate the triangulation of responses, the breadth of perspective that the survey was able to collect, strengthened by the defined depth of the interview responses.

This study utilized the mixed methods approach of explanatory design, collecting both quantitative and qualitative data through the surveys and then utilizing qualitative methods to help explain the results, by interviewing a small number of the survey respondents. The study was strengthened from the findings collected by each method. Utilizing the quantitative survey method allowed me to collect data from a larger number of faculty, staff, and administrators and thus provided more information about frequency and magnitude of attitude and perception among community college educators across North Carolina (Creswell, 2005). Utilizing the qualitative interview method allowed me to collect much more in-depth data. This provided a more complete detailed picture of the individual educators' strategies for successfully encouraging undocumented students to overcome the challenges they face, to persist, and to graduate. The descriptive nature of qualitative research provided more insight, or explanatory power, through its focus on studying meaning and understanding.

Onwuegbuzie and Johnson (2006) explained that mixed methods research takes a pragmatic approach, "to search for workable solutions through the practice of research...to help answer questions that we value and to provide workable improvements in our world" (p. 54). A mixed methods study may involve intramethod and intermethod mixing. Intramethod mixing has been defined as the "concurrent or sequential use of a *single* method that includes both qualitative and quantitative components" (Johnson and Turner, 2003, p. 298). The survey utilized in this study included intramethod mixing through the open and closed questions that yielded both qualitative and quantitative data. Intermethod involved the use of two different methods, in this case both survey and interview. Johnson and Turner (2003) suggested the use of both intramethod and intermethod mixing in the same study, resulting in

“more thorough information, corroboration of findings, and overall a much more trustworthy” study (p. 316). This study was designed as a concurrent nested study that collected quantitative data within a qualitative frame.

Qualitative methods. Qualitative methods enable data collection regarding insights and lived experiences to gain a deeper understanding of a situation (Neuman, 2006). This study adopted a qualitative exploratory approach, best suited to explore the attitudes, perspectives, and experiences of participants (Creswell, 2009). Qualitative research focuses on a particular phenomenon in an attempt to discover new meaning that may improve the situation (Shank, 2006). The goals of the constructivist paradigm are meaning and understanding (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). More specifically, individual meaning and depth of understanding are the goals of research projects conducted within the constructivist paradigm, the findings of which generate interpretations, sometimes unique to a particular context (Stage & Manning, 2003). This research provides description of the multiple realities, socially constructed within a particular context. Stage and Manning (2003) described this “meaning making” as helping to understand “the ways of being of individuals within an organization or characteristics and behavior of groups who occupy a particular culture” (p. 21). In this research project specifically, the goal was to describe the phenomena of knowledge and attitudes that the population of community college educators within the context of North Carolina community colleges have toward undocumented students and how they developed them, and therefore the phenomena under study is the presence and development of undocu-competence that exists among some educators within North Carolina community colleges.

In accordance with the constructivist view, the purpose of this research project was to add to the body of knowledge, by providing time-and-context dependent interpretations of this phenomenon (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). One potential weakness of this constructivist approach was that my own values as researcher may have influenced what I was able to “see” within this research context, and therefore may have impacted my analysis and interpretation of the qualitative data collected with this survey. Lincoln (2002) notes that the researcher’s advocacy may cause them to overlook data in the collection process which may not appear relevant and therefore compromise the validity of the project. The nature of data collection in this research project, through survey and interview, helped to minimize that threat to validity in the collection process itself. However, it was still certainly applicable within the interpretation and analysis phase and I used member checking in an attempt to reduce this possibility. I have also described my positionality later in this chapter, developed as I intentionally reflected on any possible bias that could affect interpretation.

Narrative inquiry. This study methodology is based in part on narrative inquiry. Narrative inquiry views individual lived experience as a valuable source of insights, useful not only on an individual level but also to the broader field of scholarship. By capturing participant voice, often through interviews, researchers can analyze how individuals make meaning from their lived experience, and themes and concepts emerge through deductive analysis of the data collected (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Whereas in post-positivist research the impact of context is acknowledged and attempted to be controlled for, narrative inquiry recognizes that people make sense of their experience within cultural, social, institutional and personal contexts, and the purpose of inquiry is that meaning making within context. I designed this study to collect insight based on the lived experiences of North Carolina

community college educators, how they have gained undocu-competence, and how they have been impacted by the contact they've had with undocumented students within their cultural, social, and institutional context. As participants shared their lived experiences, they have illustrated that context for all of us, and we have been able to explore and examine the knowledge and attitudes of colleagues toward undocumented students and the level of validation, resources, and support for undocumented students present within each context.

Narrative survey. Specifically, within the paradigm of narrative inquiry, this study was inspired by the qualitative research strategy of the narrative survey, used to survey large populations, with a goal of developing a qualitative understanding of the unique narrative of many individuals, representative of that population (Shkedi, 2004). An often-shared assumption of both quantitative and qualitative researchers is the concept of the conventional survey, designed to collect quantitative or numeric information about some aspect of the population being examined. One of the most frequently stated limitations of qualitative research is the limited scope of the extremely small number of participants (Guba & Lincoln, 1998). Since qualitative studies often involve extensive case studies or lengthy interviews, and are extremely time consuming, the number of participants is usually small (Research and Planning Group, 2011).

The narrative survey method is based on the assumption that rich and complicated phenomena are better represented in narrative format, and that narratives of larger populations can be a valuable source of data (Shkedi, 2004). The narrative survey approach used in this study provided an opportunity to obtain rich qualitative responses from a larger number of participants. The advantage of the narrative survey approach was the broader representative view of the population. The narrative-constructivist approach remained central

throughout this study, with analysis of the responses as individual narrative cases, rather than a positivistic-quantitative analysis. The “associational view” (p. 90) helped to identify patterns that appeared within the narratives collected (Shkedi, 2004). The in-depth qualitative analysis of the phenomena discussed within the narrative of the individual survey responses provided insight through themes revealed and was strengthened in connection with the presence of those themes that also emerged from the narrative in the other survey responses within the study. Simons (1996) explained the benefit of the narrative survey approach that “by studying the uniqueness of the particular, we come to understand the universal” (p. 226).

A central assumption shared by researchers who utilize the narrative survey design is that the data being collected is narrative constructivist in its very nature. Shkedi (2004) asserted that “the data is gathered from people and focuses on their stories, their explanation for activities in which they participate, and the meaning they give to the phenomena in which they engage” and this must be understood within the participants’ context. Analysis of data obtained through narrative survey involved narrative categorization, the creation of categories relevant to and developed by the interpretation of the data. This analysis was used to convey a meaningful description of the phenomena investigated, to answer the research questions. Narrative survey research also includes quantitative methods for the purposes of description, for instance to designate frequency (Shkedi, 2004). In the results analysis for this study, the number of respondents who expressed certain attitudes was aggregated and a scaled score was calculated for participants’ level of knowledge, in quantitative numbers and percentages. It is important however to note that this did not indicate a departure from the qualitative constructivist epistemology.

Participants

A convenience sample of community college educators in North Carolina were asked to participate via email. It is possible that faculty, staff, and administrators from each of the 58 colleges across North Carolina received and viewed the email invitation to participate, including institutional agents from both rural and urban college campuses. This sample was selected in accordance with the purpose and rationale of the study, which was to investigate community college educators' attitudes toward and understanding of the undocumented student population and to provide brief description of how some of those educators have developed undocu-competence.

Within the 58 Community Colleges in North Carolina, there are approximately 35,000 faculty and staff. This survey was distributed through an email to multiple list-serv's within the NCCCS system with a request to distribute it to all faculty and staff at each institution. There was no expectation that the survey respondents were statistically representative of the entire population and with that recognition, there were no claims for generalization of study results, since this study was based on a qualitative approach. Although participants were not asked to identify their college name on the survey, they were directed to a separate survey and asked for their email address if they were interested in eligibility for the incentive drawing. This process allowed me to keep their contact information completely separate from their survey responses, but also enabled me to analyze the email address information to tally the unique number of college domains. It is important to note here, that since a high number of participants entered a personal email address, it is possible there were participants from an even greater number of colleges, but I was at least able to count the minimum. There were 274 respondents who completed the survey from at

least 32 community colleges across North Carolina from institutions of varying size with suspected varying size of undocumented student populations.

My initial aim was to get broad representation from each institution type (large, small, rural, urban) and follow up as necessary with individual colleges if there was a lack of response from any particular institution type. The percentage of respondents by institutional type was equivalent to the percentage of institutional types in the system, as displayed in the respondent table, Table 1 below.

Table 1			
<i>Respondent descriptors</i>			
Descriptor Categories		%	n
Institution Type	Small Rural	36%	98
	Large Rural	19%	52
	Small Urban	15%	41
	Large Urban	30%	82
Role Type	Faculty	36%	98
	Student Affairs/Services Staff and Administrators	20%	56
	Academic Affairs Staff and Administrators	18%	49
	Other Roles (ie. Institutional Research, Financial Services)	26%	71

During Phase Two the participants included a small sample from a self-selected group that participated in individual interviews following the survey data collection and analysis. To recruit this sample, the last question in the survey asked respondents if they were interested in participating in a 30-45 minute follow up interview. If they selected ‘yes’ as their response, they were directed to a separate page within the survey that asked them to provide their contact information. I did have to modify the criteria I initially intended to use to select participants from those who indicated their interest which was intended to be, a)

fully completed all closed and open-ended items in the survey and b) must have provided responses that indicate favorable attitudes and higher levels of knowledge toward undocumented students. Since there were rather low levels of knowledge across all survey respondents and mixed attitudes, the criteria were modified to be, a) fully completed all closed and open-ended items in the survey and b) provided responses that indicated some level of knowledge toward undocumented students and attitudes that were not rated as highly negative. From the 274 survey respondents I identified 24 participants whom I could contact for in-depth interviews, and those participants represented 19 different community colleges within the North Carolina system.

Each of the interview participants were asked to share how long they had been working in the NC community college system, even if not always in their current role. The responses were varied, with 25% of the interview participants at the community college for less than 3 years and 50% employed in the NC community college system for more than 10 years. Three of the participants had 20 years of experience at the community college, one as a full-time faculty member, one as a Dean of Career and College Readiness, and one as Director of Advising. They were also asked to describe their current role at the institution, and there were 11 faculty members, spanning across disciplines: English, Math, Sociology, Humanities, Business, Communications, and Study Skills. Two of those eleven faculty were adjunct and 1 was a Chair of their Department. Eight interview participants held Academic Administrative roles, including a coordinator and a Dean of career and college promise, secondary partnerships, adult education, and a Vice President of Academics. Five of the participants were in Student Service leadership roles, including a Director of Advising, a student retention manager, a dean of students, a counselor, and a TRIO advisor.

Data Collection

This study consisted of two concurrent phases. In Phase One data was collected through a web survey collector that asked participants to self-report their knowledge and attitudes towards undocumented students, and in Phase Two, follow-up interviews were conducted with a small number of those respondents. Participants in Phase One were asked if they would be interested in participating in an interview and if so they were asked to provide their contact information thus indicating their consent to be contacted.

Instrumentation. The instruments that were utilized in this research study included a web-based survey based on the literature reviewed that was designed to capture the data needed to answer the research questions posed, and a flexible interview guide used for in-depth qualitative interviews. The survey instrument included as Appendix A was created based on the research questions this study investigated and informed by relevant surveys that had been used in other studies (Cruz, 2014; Nienhusser & Espino, 2016). The interview guide is included in Appendix B and was used consistently in each interview, although with a flexible format that was responsive to the input from each interviewee, and their individual emphasis, based on their narrative of their lived experience.

Instrument: Survey. The survey included items that assess attitudes towards undocumented students, for instance whether higher education is a right that undocumented students should be entitled to, and whether undocumented students should benefit from tuition equity. In addition, participants' knowledge of current regulations that affect this student population, the barriers they must overcome, and the socio-emotional consequences that often correspond to those barriers were assessed. Survey items included questions that measured whether participants understood the steps undocumented immigrants must take to

adjust their status, or to emigrate ‘legally’ from their native countries. Other items were designed in an attempt to analyze the source of the information respondents possessed, how they acquired that knowledge, and how they developed those attitudes.

Survey questions were designed to assess understanding of immigration policy issues, (tuition equity, admission, financial aid) and attitudes about undocumented students, and provided participants the opportunity to give more in-depth responses through the open-ended questions. One of the goals for the survey design was for the questions to equally represent potential opinions on both sides of the issue, thus avoiding bias in the survey design and construction. So, while individual items may have been ideologically slanted, that was intentional, and those items were balanced by others that had the opposing slant. It was important that this balance avoided providing signal cues that could cause respondents to unconsciously respond to questions in the way it was perceived responses were desired (Zaller, 1992).

The survey was intentionally organized to capture qualitative data on the following topics:

- a) The respondent’s awareness of students’ status, knowledge about national and state policy impacting undocumented students, and understanding of the barriers these students face (2 items)
- b) The respondent’s personal attitudes towards undocumented students, and the broader undocumented immigrant population as a whole (3 items)
- c) How respondents gained that knowledge about the barriers that undocumented students face and developed those attitudes toward undocumented students (2 items)

- d) Any validation and support strategies respondents may employ to assist undocumented students and any transformational resistance activities they may engage in as a result of their undocu-competence (2 items)

The survey included both close- and open-ended questions that originated based on the research questions and were created for the purposes of this study. The open-ended questions provided an opportunity for participants to construct thoughtful responses reflective of their own understanding of their experience (Neuman, 2003). These responses are usually much more rich, detailed, and descriptive than traditional closed-ended survey questions, since respondents can easily elaborate to provide examples or other types of clarification (Patton, 2002). Open-ended questions don't limit participant response to pre-determined choices, and therefore decrease researcher bias (Creswell, 2009). The responses also allowed an opportunity for participants' point of view to be more accurately captured and understood through qualitative analysis.

The survey was based on the literature reviewed that focused on undocumented students' college experiences, especially with educators, and the qualities of undocu-competence encountered (Nienhusser & Espino, 2016; Chen & Rhoads, 2016; Lopez, 2010; Stebleton & Aleixo, 2015; Stanton-Salazar, 2011). The survey contained both qualitative and quantitative items combined in the single instrument for the purposes of strengthening the analysis. The quantitative items included multiple choice, Likert Scales and True/False matrices. The open-ended questions provided the opportunity for respondents to expand on and explain their responses and offered illustrative examples that were analyzed as rich qualitative data. Open-ended survey items allowed respondents to "offer responses within their own unique context,

and the value of the information provided can be extremely high” (The Research & Planning Group, 2011, p. 6).

The first two survey questions were demographic and helped describe the aggregate characteristics of survey respondents who comprise the study participants. The third question assessed participants’ knowledge about the legislation and barriers undocumented students face with college access. The fourth question asked participants about their contact and personal experience with undocumented students. The fifth question was a five-point Likert scale that assessed participants’ attitudes toward undocumented students and their beliefs about tuition equity and paths to citizenship, rating from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree with attitudinal statements. The sixth question was open-ended and asked participants to explain their beliefs about undocumented students. The seventh question was also open-ended and asked participants to describe specific experiences they’ve had with undocumented students and to consider how that has impacted their beliefs about undocumented students. The eighth question was a four-point Likert scale that asked respondents to rate their level of knowledge about legislation that has impacted undocumented students and the legal requirements about undocumented students in higher education. The ninth question was designed to assess participants’ attitudes toward undocumented students through a seven-item matrix that asked participants to indicate whether they would oppose or favor legislation that is supportive or restrictive for undocumented students. Both the tenth and eleventh questions asked participants to identify challenges undocumented students face and the twelfth and thirteenth question asked about supportive strategies and advocacy for undocumented students, both that is available on their campus and that they engage in personally.

The survey was housed within the Survey Monkey platform, and the web-based survey was accessed through a link in an email that all potential participants received. This format offered several advantages: 1) participants were able to access the survey easily; 2) the data was stored efficiently enhancing the ability of rapid data collection; 3) the platform offered the ability to include skip logic; 4) it involved low cost, eliminating the need for printing paper copies, mailing, and other unnecessary expenses (Vehovar, Batagelj, Manfreda, & Zaletel, 2002). According to the time spent in survey, a metric that was calculated by Survey Monkey, it took approximately 27 minutes on average for participants to complete the survey. The data was collected during a four-week window and one email reminder per week was sent to increase the response rate.

Because faculty and staff at community colleges may feel uneasy about expressing strong opinions on this sensitive topic, a web-based survey which provided confidentiality was selected as the method for data collection. Given the nature of this topic, the confidentiality of the web-based survey provided participants the opportunity to share details of private encounters they may not otherwise have been willing to share, also for fear of risking students' hidden identity. Neuman (2003) suggested that responses from surveys are often more honest and raw than glossed responses gained during interviews. Web-based surveys have been found to be more effective than mail or self-administered surveys since participants are able to provide immediate responses with minimal effort (Greenlaw & Brown-Welty, 2009).

This study required a series of questions that have not been asked on other surveys. Although items may have been adapted from existing surveys, they were modified to seek responses which would provide data for the particular research questions examined in this

project. They had also not been combined in a single instrument prior to this study. Many survey questions about unauthorized immigration have previously been composed as closed-ended with limited response choices. By including a broader range of responses and open-ended response questions, it is possible to show that opinions on this issue are not always binary. Respondents may indeed seem to provide contradictory responses because they could support either position conditionally and open-ended questions will provide opportunities for respondents to provide explanation. Since I developed the survey specifically for this study, it was reviewed by three content experts for content validity. These content experts were community college practitioners who are nationally recognized for the advocacy they engage in for undocumented students at their institution.

Instrument: Interview. Phase II was a follow-up interview process that took place concurrently with Phase I, since I began interviewing participants while the survey window was still open. The last question on the survey asked participants if they were interested in participating in a follow-up interview and only respondents who clicked ‘yes’ were asked for their email address. The interviews took between 45 minutes to an hour and were conducted via Zoom video conferencing that facilitated easy recording, with participant permission.

The interviews were conducted as an opportunity to hear directly from participants about their attitudes and related experiences with undocumented students, to probe more deeply on how they acquired the knowledge and developed the attitudes they possess as well as a description of any validation and support they provide undocumented students and any transformational resistance activities they currently engage in. Participants were also asked to share their perspective on the undocu-competence that exists more broadly at their institution, among their faculty and staff colleagues, and to provide any suggestions they may

believe will increase that undocu-competence. Participants were encouraged to expand on their survey responses with detail and clarity. The interviews were semi-structured, and I utilized an informal interview guide containing questions I asked the majority of the participants, but not necessarily in the same order, as to allow natural flow (Merriam, 2009). The guide was based on themes that emerged from the analysis of survey data which helped to ensure patterns were investigated more deeply, and also helped to avoid leading questions and simple yes-no questions. But I used the guide flexibly so that I could be “free to explore, probe, and ask questions that will elucidate and illuminate that particular subject” (Patton, 2002, p. 343). Interviewees were asked to respond to prompts by sharing stories of their experiences, for instance stories about their contact with undocumented students, and stories about how they came to acquire greater knowledge about undocumented students. This facilitated participants revealing feelings and opinions they wouldn’t otherwise have even been aware of, aided by the contextual triggers present within their story (Kurtz, 2010).

Data Analysis

Neuman (2003) describes the open-ended survey method as a qualitative approach to understanding an educational or social issue or phenomenon. SurveyMonkey contains embedded tools to assist with data analysis. The browsing tool enabled detailed analysis of individual responses, while the collective summary tool facilitated viewing aggregated responses for each individual item. Although there were items that collected quantitative data, through scales and other formats, the quantitative analysis was mostly descriptive, to illustrate the participants’ characteristics and the context in which they work, and this data was compiled and analyzed in aggregate. Qualitative analysis was used to code participants’ responses to the open-ended survey questions and the transcripts of participant interviews, to

examine each for emerging themes and then the themes that appeared in the qualitative data collected through each method were compared for commonalities and differences.

Quantitative Data Analysis. Quantitative analysis of the survey data collected in this study consisted of calculating the percentages of participants selecting each response category, for instance level of knowledge on each self-rating item, correct or incorrect responses on factual items, degree of attitude on each attitudinal statement prompt, and extent of contact based on whether or not participants indicated they had particular experiences with each of those items. I also calculated an aggregate scale score for each participant on each dimension- knowledge, attitude, and contact, based on the compilation of each of their responses across those items. Each positive or correct response choice was assigned a positive point value and each negative or incorrect response choice was assigned a negative point value. The knowledge scale score ranged from -12 to 18. The attitude scale score ranged from -24 to 24. The level of contact score ranged from 0 to 10. This allowed for disaggregation and simple bivariate comparative analysis to identify any trends across scores for participant role or type of institution. The goal of this quantitative analysis was to describe the individual undocu-competence present among participants who were North Carolina community college educators, as measured by their knowledge level and their favorable attitudes toward the undocumented student population, and to measure the extent of contact these respondents currently have with undocumented students, all of which may be indicative of the broader NC Community College educator population.

Qualitative Data Analysis. Coding allows researchers to organize and gain insight from qualitative data. Qualitative coding is especially useful when analyzing participant narrative regarding experiences. (Saladana, 2013). This study used topic coding to “reflect on

all the different ways people discuss particular topics to seek patterns in their responses, or to develop dimensions of that experience” (Richards & Morse, 2007, p.134). The coding process included interpretation of single instances and categorical aggregation from multiple responses or multiple instances within a response (Stake, 1995). Color coding was used to identify categories and allow themes to emerge. Initially open coding identified the patterns that were first recognized, and tentative categories or codes were explored and rearranged as necessary and grouped by axial or analytic coding. The codes were exhaustive, conceptually congruent, and sensitive to the data (Merriam, 2009). During the axial coding process, data was reexamined and organized by code labels (Neuman, 2003). Direct quotes from participants that illustrate those themes were also identified, using participants’ own words to represent the reality and credibility of the study (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voetgle 2006). I have included participant’s exact words often in the results analysis and discussion within the next three chapters, to accurately and authentically represent their meaning and convey the insights gained and have also included additional participant voices grouped thematically in Appendix D.

I created post-interview notes immediately following each interview to capture initial thoughts, perceptions, and any interesting points or beginnings of themes that emerged during the construction of meaning that occurs in the interview interaction. This post-interview process also helped to identify and minimize potential bias. Patton (2003, p.384) described the period after an interview as “a critical time of reflection and elaboration”. During this stage I focused on the research questions in this study and reflected on the insights gained from the participant’s interview responses regarding how they developed their individual undocu-competence. This is an important topic that is both aligned with the

mission of the North Carolina community college system, to open the door to accessible high-quality education that minimizes the barriers to post-secondary education, and also contributes to the existing body of research demonstrating the impact of validation by institutional agents, on the success of undocumented students as described in the chapters that follow.

Ethical Concerns: Abiding by Standards

The completed survey data was housed within the password-protected Survey Monkey platform. Responses were exported to a file that was temporarily stored on a password-protected computer through the analysis period. Since the survey data collection was all electronic there was no paper-based data to be stored. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed, and both the recordings and the transcriptions were stored on a password-protected laptop. The files were also uploaded to a password protected online file storage system (Google documents) to back up the files.

Trustworthiness, Authenticity and Confirmability. This study assumed participants answered the questions with honesty and full effort. However, it must also be recognized that honesty and willingness to answer the questions with the full cognitive effort required could have potentially been problematic since the survey completion was on a volunteer basis. Internal threats to authenticity such as attrition certainly may have existed, since some participants could have started the survey but not have completed it. Incomplete responses were considered important data and analyzed for possible patterns in responses, to note any particular influence on attrition. While a high percentage of respondents did skip the open-ended questions, there were no other significant patterns that seemed to impact non-completers.

Although with narrative survey research, the survey design and analysis is constructed conceptually rather than statistically, it is still important to give some regard to construct validity of the survey, that it will indeed measure, or collect data, about the phenomena in question. When designing this study, and the survey tool, I attempted to minimize the likelihood of the four primary sources of error that can potentially threaten the trustworthiness of response; coverage error, sampling error, nonresponse error, and measurement error (Leeuw, Hox, & Dillman, 2008) Since the survey link was deployed across multiple listservs so that faculty and staff across the NCCCS institutions at least had the possibility of viewing the email invitation to participate, there should be broad coverage across the targeted population. Since this was a convenience sample that did not use random selection, it was not possible to rely on statistical probability theory, but responses were monitored for equal representation across the demographic responses in an attempt to reach saturation. There were sufficient numbers of participants in each role type and across institution type.

The survey was intentionally designed to reduce measurement error by providing questions that use common language and are straightforward and clear to understand. Within the closed-ended questions, open-ended response options were also provided, both through an ‘other, please explain’ choice in case the response options were not exhaustive and excluded a response the respondent would like to provide, and also a comment box in case the respondent desired to explain any response choice they selected or to describe their interpretation if they were uncertain about the question meaning, which then allowed for more accurate measurement.

A survey should be validated by ensuring the questions elicit responses related to the central constructs, attitudes, knowledge, experience, or phenomenon, intended to be studied through research (Fink, 2006). Content validity was tested through a review by professionals with expertise on this topic. They were asked to provide input or any suggestions about the semantics, syntax, and survey content. Through the evaluation by these professionals, and careful consideration from the dissertation committee, this survey instrument was deemed acceptable and appropriate for use to conduct this research project. This collaboration between experts added credibility to the survey and helped avoid bias.

Since the study depended on participants' self-report through their survey response, response bias may have occurred as some participants may have attempted to provide 'optimal' answers, and others may have been less motivated to provide carefully thought out responses (Krosnick & Presser, 2010). Marsden and Wright (2010) referred to this as "weak satisficing", a tendency to provide an answer that is only minimally satisfactory, while other respondents may provide an answer that conveys "strong satisficing" (p.265). Although it was beyond this researcher's ability to control the willingness of participants to engage in complex mental tasks, the survey was developed to minimize satisficing and maximize trustworthiness. For instance, wording was strategically crafted, and questions were intentionally sequenced to reduce response bias that could be caused by task difficulty or motivation (Alreck & Settle, 1995). Participants may have been reluctant to communicate the accurate judgment they hold privately, because of social desirability and self-presentation. The confidentiality provided by the web-survey maximized the likelihood that participants would feel more comfortable disclosing true attitudes. The demographic information

requested was minimal, and when provided by those who opted-in to be contacted for interviews, it was coded by number and stored separately to ensure confidentiality.

There were many individual micro-steps involved in the question answering process respondents engaged in, to answer each survey question. They must first assess the intended meaning behind the question, recall the information asked and/or make an immediate judgment based on that question, and then match that answer to one of the answer responses provided (Leeuw, Hox, & Dillman, 2008). Respondents may experience survey fatigue if the survey is not a manageable length. In order to avoid this possible bias due to attrition and authenticity, this survey was designed to be shorter in length and also to vary the format in which questions were presented, alternating item types between closed-ended response and open-ended responses.

Despite assurance of confidentiality, respondents may have still hesitated to provide their actual answer due to self-presentation as it relates to social desirability (Leeuw, Hox, and Dillman, 2008). In an effort to address this threat, variation was included within items so that participants were not perceived to consistently be selecting 'negative' answers such as 'disagree' or 'oppose'. For instance, individual line items within questions alternated between the opposing viewpoints to reduce any positive or negative connotation with either view. When participants are asked completely open-ended questions, they may not recall complete information, or may misinterpret and deem information as not within the purview of what the researcher would be interested in and therefore may not have consider or include relevant information. On the other hand, when participants are asked closed-ended questions in a list format for instance, their answers may be limited based upon what is included in that list and excluding any other potentially valid responses to that particular question. This

survey was designed to include both open-ended and closed-ended questions to strengthen results, counter-balancing and compensating for the limitations of each question type. On closed-ended questions, respondents were provided an opportunity to include additional thoughts that were not included in the list through the use of an 'Other' answer choice and comment box. I also intentionally designed the question sequence in an attempt to provide cognitive stimulation regarding this particular topic, beginning with a couple of closed-ended items before asking for the first open-ended response.

Since the survey was self-administered, if participants had the ability to go back to previous questions already answered, it may have increased the likelihood that later questions would influence the response to earlier ones (Schwarz and Hippler, 1995). To eliminate this possibility the survey was designed to not allow for participants to return to previously answered questions. It is also possible that participants could respond more than once, thus skewing the results, but the survey was also designed not to allow more than one attempt from any single IP address. In any case where items may have caused question-order effect, buffer items were used, that shifted focus between items and thus minimized the impact. Response choices even within items may have impacted which responses participants selected, based on primacy or recency effect, and so to counteract that possibility response choices were automatically shuffled in and presented in a random order. Responses were also monitored for the appearance of 'random' answer patterns, as evidenced by repeated conflicting responses to related questions or alternative meaning items, and any responses clearly identified as random were discarded from the data set. This protected the credibility of the results from any potential impact of agreement acquiescence, in which respondents simply agreed or disagreed with all statements (Tourangeau, Rips, & Rasinski, 2000).

This study sought to meet the established guidelines for trustworthiness, authenticity, and rigor during the analysis phase by using strategies that included an audit trail and member checking. (Peshkin, 1993). Files were saved with names that corresponded to the content but also to the date of data collection, and subsequently data analysis, to demonstrate the steps involved in the coding process. Member checking was used to establish credibility, as the interviewees had an opportunity to review the themes that emerged and provide feedback (Starkey, 2015). Member checking offered participants the opportunity to review the researcher's interpretation of narratives and to decrease the possibility of any researcher bias that may not have been recognized.

Protection from Harm. This research project has been approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Appalachian State University who reviewed the proposed study to ensure it met all ethical procedures. There are many layers of ethics that were important to abide by in this study. It is possible that the educators may have felt vulnerable when exposing true opinions, due to societal pressure, because there is currently such strong anti-immigrant sentiment. The survey items were designed with that acknowledgement and a commitment to minimize that risk and were therefore not overly extreme in either direction. The survey also offered participants the opportunity to explain their responses since a comment box was included with the majority of items. I aimed to establish participant trust and hoped to ease any possible anxiety they may have experienced while completing the survey, by ensuring them that I would disguise their identity, so that results would not be able to be directly linked to them individually, even if they provided their contact information.

I was also transparent about the purpose of the study, reassuring participants about the confidentiality of the data they submitted and explaining how the information would be used

in aggregate. I took all appropriate measures to minimize risk and ensure that participants were empowered, that the results would be beneficial to community college educators across North Carolina and that those benefits far outweighed any risks they may have faced. I made every effort to be clear at all times that survey respondents had a choice to decline participation at any point during the study and could have discontinued the survey at any point. I included the Consent Form and an opportunity to accept or decline as the first question within the survey, to ensure they understood and had the opportunity to provide their informed consent.

The initial email explaining the study and the additional details provided within the consent form item on the survey, informed the participants that the study was voluntary, what would occur during the study, and the expectations for how much time it would take to complete. The reassurance was provided that no health risks were involved and complete anonymity during result analysis was maintained, unless they chose to opt-in to be contacted for a follow-up interview in which case the responses were only viewed in aggregate total, connected to that individual's name, for the purposes of contacting them for the interview. Participants were reminded that they could withdraw from the study at any time and could also discontinue the survey at any time if they felt it was necessary to do so.

By completing the survey, and acknowledging the initial consent item, the participants provided evidence of their willingness to participate. Only minimal demographic data was collected, all information was kept confidential, all participants were over the age of 18, and the study was completely voluntary, therefore protection from harm was achieved. I will keep one copy of the results on my personal computer which is password protected, and

all results will be destroyed after a three-year period. I will destroy any unused data immediately after my submission of this dissertation.

Informed Consent. Participants were provided a description of the purpose of the study in the email they received inviting them to participate in the study, which addressed confidentiality and any potential risks (see Appendix C. Complete information was provided to possible participants both in the initial email they received and also on the first page of the survey, including the purpose of the study, the time commitment required, any risks and benefits of participation, and steps taken to minimize those risks. This email clearly outlined information about the procedures and intended analysis, as well as the anticipated benefits to the community colleges, and the steps that would be taken to ensure confidentiality. Possible risks and discomforts during the interview process were discussed as well as the broad benefits of this research. The possible benefit to educators from this study, is the ability it provides to explore innovative methods that community college faculty and staff can use to assist undocumented students navigate the barriers they face. It is an important study for anyone who desires to provide an equitable education for undocumented students within North Carolina, as well as for college and system office administrators who are inclined to gain additional knowledge about the attitudes held by some individual faculty and staff within the system.

The email that participants received contained a link to the web-based survey and the first question asked potential respondents to acknowledge their consent before proceeding. This item contained text that informed participants that proceeding with the survey demonstrated an indication of their consent to participate. The participants' affirmative response on this informed consent item certified their acknowledgment of the protection of

their rights and confirmed their agreement to be a part of the study. A chance to obtain an incentive was offered in exchange for survey completion but the email was also explicit that the educators could decline to participate with no adverse consequences. Informed consent was then obtained through question one on the survey, if the participant decided to continue and participate. This question asked participants to confirm their understanding of the nature of the study, any potential risks and confidentiality, and to provide their consent to participate.

Privacy and Confidentiality. Individuals may be wary of completing web-based surveys, especially about sensitive topics, because they're concerned about the disclosure of their identity and how results may be used (Fink, 2006). Therefore, it was extremely crucial that potential participants understood that confidentiality would be upheld and their personal information would not be linked to their survey responses. In order to protect the privacy of project participants, the IP addresses were masked and not connected to individual responses. Although demographic information was obtained, it was only utilized in aggregate to group responses by college for the purpose of analysis. Participants had the option to provide contact information if they were willing to participate in a follow-up interview but were again assured that the contact information would remain separate from their other responses during the process of analysis and would not be shared with anyone. All data was kept on the server with SurveyMonkey.com during the duration of the study and the survey will be deleted after the research process is completed. As already noted and following common best practice, any hard copy data will be kept in a locked file in my personal office and will be destroyed after three years (Fink, 2006).

Steps were taken at all stages of the study to minimize risk and ensure confidentiality. To maintain confidentiality, the survey only requested minimal demographic data that was not personally identifiable. The last question on the survey asked participants if they were interested in participating in a follow-up interview and only respondents who clicked ‘yes’ were asked for their email address. Those email addresses were coded and stored separately from their other survey data responses in order to minimize the risk of loss of privacy. Each participant in the interview process was given a pseudonym and neither the individual’s name nor their institution name was recorded.

The last page of the survey that presented the interview option also assured respondents that their continued participation in the study through the interview process was completely voluntary and neither their participation nor their potential withdrawal would in any way affect their employment status.

Positionality

As mentioned in the previous chapter, I have been intentional about remaining aware of my own personal bias as I analyzed the data gathered through this study. It was important for me to recognize that I am a researcher but also a community college educator myself, and an ally for undocumented students. To recognize my own positionality, I reflected on my role as an educational practitioner who serves as a community college administrator, and as an ally who seeks to validate the undocumented students I am lucky enough to encounter. I have been passionate about advocating for undocumented students for the last two decades. First as a college student myself, as I began encountering friends who faced stumbling blocks to participating in everyday activities, then as an ESL teacher in the K-12 system when I saw students who were absolutely brilliant learn for the first time that it didn’t matter how bright

they were nor how dedicated, college wasn't a possibility for them, because they didn't have the right piece of paper. My dedication to advocating for this student population continues now as I am a community college educator when I see the challenges students are constantly facing as they struggle to pursue their post-secondary education despite all the roadblocks along their pathway.

Through my own personal and professional background, and the positive contact I have had with members of the undocumented immigrant population, I have developed a passion to collaborate with members of the population as we practice transformational resistance and oppose oppression through every opportunity. Since I speak Spanish fluently, I easily establish rapport with undocumented students and their families and they will often share their stories with me. As I listen to them describe the challenges they face, I am always amazed by the incredible resilience they demonstrate. It is easy for me to feel connected to them, since my own family is bicultural and some extended family members have faced the same struggles. It is encouraging to hear students describe the nurturing relationships they are able to form with some of their instructors or other staff members, and how much it has helped them. On the other hand, it is disturbing to hear them describe negative experiences they encounter with some faculty and staff and how discouraging it can be for them.

It is with admiration for the cultural wealth that these students possess, the heartbreak that I feel when I see them denied the opportunities they deserve, and an awareness of how much more I still have to learn that I began this study. I don't presume to speak for the undocumented, nor claim to fully understand the fear they live in daily, the psychosocial stress they experience as a result, nor the myriad of other overwhelming challenges they face. While I don't place blame on any administrators within the North Carolina Community

College System and wholeheartedly believe they are dedicated to pursuing equitable outcomes for all students, I do hope that this study may provide stimulus for revolutionary transformation. My desire as an advocate would be for all faculty and staff to be undocu-competent, and it was with this motivation that I proceeded with this study, aware of this potential bias and taking the necessary precautions to minimize the impact this will have on the interpretation of data collected.

Chapter 4

Insights gained from Survey Responses

This chapter provides both the quantitative and qualitative analysis of survey responses and is sequenced to provide the key findings that address each research question. The responses provide a broad glimpse of the undocumented competence possessed by community college educators in North Carolina since the 274 survey respondents represent varying institution types and hold a variety of roles. Each item on the survey was intentionally designed to collect a specific piece of information related to a particular research question. That item mapping was useful in the analysis of survey responses and guides the organization of this chapter, with a summary of key findings at the end of the chapter.

1) What knowledge do respondents who are faculty and staff in the North Carolina Community College system possess about this student group?

The participants' responses to survey questions designed to assess respondents' basic knowledge level about undocumented students' access to post-secondary education, the challenges students face, and the legislation that impact them, revealed an overall lack of knowledge across respondent groups and size of institution. The results demonstrated that almost one in four respondents did not know whether undocumented students are even allowed to enroll in community colleges. Other questions asked respondents about regulations governing the eligibility for undocumented students to receive in-state tuition, federal financial aid, and driver's licenses. Across these six factual yes-no response questions, an average of 22% of respondents provided the incorrect response, answering 'yes' to the question about whether undocumented students are charged in-state tuition in North Carolina for instance. The percentage of respondents that stated they did not have the

knowledge they needed to answer the question, ranged from 25%-46% on each of the other items. Respondents had the least amount of knowledge about how DACA status impacted the students. When respondents were asked to self-rate their level of knowledge about the path undocumented students have available to them to access college and the barriers they face, at least 46% of respondents indicated they possessed low knowledge on every item. Figure 3 shows the percentage of respondents that rated themselves within each knowledge level.

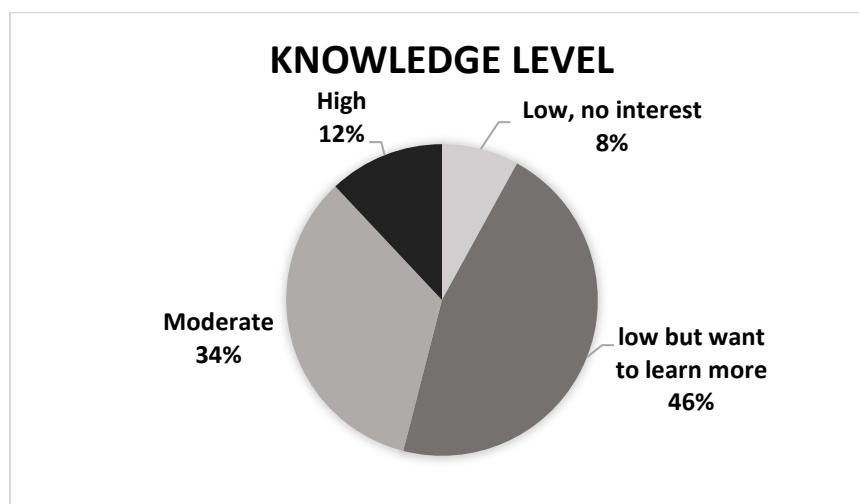


Figure 3. Respondents' self-rating: level of knowledge about undocumented students

The significant finding displayed in Figure 3 is that over half of the respondents rated themselves as having low knowledge and a very small percentage, only 12% rated themselves as having high knowledge. This finding may indicate that community college educators within North Carolina have low levels of knowledge about undocumented students.

Some of the respondents who indicated they were not interested in learning any more, expressed highly negative comments such as the comment from a faculty member at a large

rural college “they are illegal immigrants who are breaking the law and therefore should not be eligible for benefits” and another faculty member also from a large rural college expressed their opinion that “Illegals do not belong here. I resent their presence and their drain on resources.” Other respondents expressed an indifference, indicating that it was not an issue of central importance to them that would motivate them to spend any time learning more, such as a faculty member at a large urban institution who shared “knowing that I have little to no say in how things go limits my interest in wasting time in learning about something I can affect very little” and a faculty member at a small institution who shared “I do not have experience with these students. It is not something I would choose to focus on and seek out at this time”. This is indicative of the attitudes held by respondents, that will be discussed later in this chapter.

When I disaggregated the results by institution size there were no consistently significant differences. Disaggregating by respondents’ role at their institution did reveal slight differences as represented in Figure 4 below. Student Services Administrators reported the highest level of knowledge, followed by Academic Administrators, whereas faculty reported lower levels of knowledge, and adjunct faculty reported the lowest level.

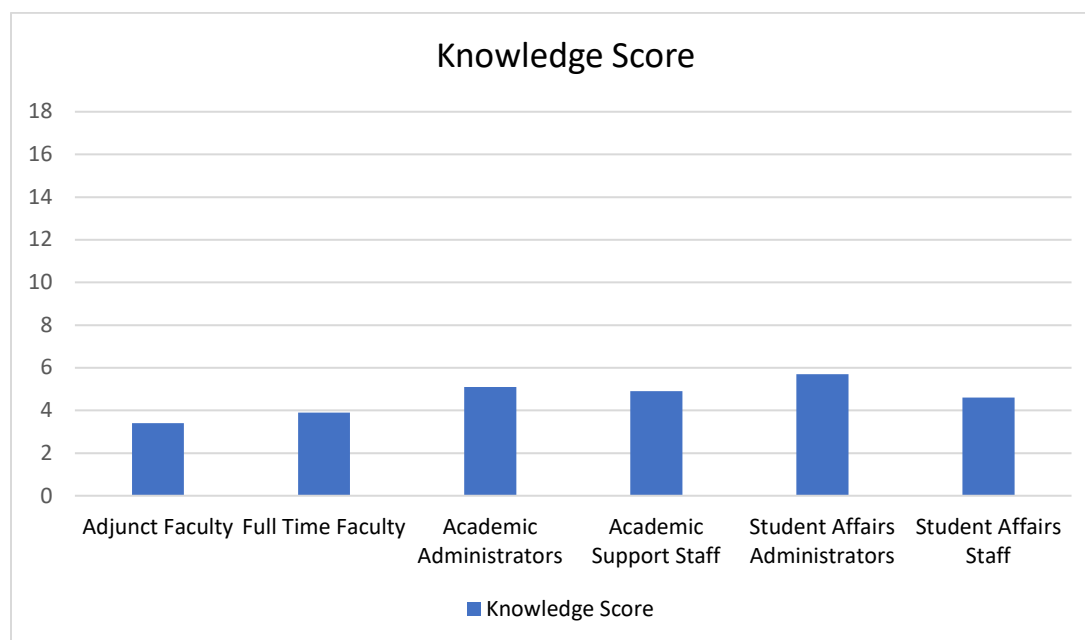


Figure 4. Mean knowledge score disaggregated by role type

The significant finding displayed in Figure 4 above, that adjunct faculty have the lowest levels of knowledge is especially interesting to consider, given that faculty have a tremendous opportunity to impact students, given the amount of time students spend engaged in classes during their college career, and an increasing number of adjunct faculty are teaching those courses at community colleges in North Carolina.

Knowledge and Understanding of Challenges

The survey results demonstrate that participants were generally able to consistently recognize the challenges that undocumented students may face, but not to self-generate them. When participants were asked to identify challenges through an open-ended question only 125 respondents, slightly less than half of the total survey respondents, chose to respond to the optional item. Of those who responded, 40% described the financial challenges students face, with out of state tuition, ineligibility for aid and many scholarships, transportation

concerns, and minimal if any employment options. Approximately 40% of the respondents included fear as a challenge the undocumented students face, fear of deportation and family separation, uncertainty for their future, and fear of their status being discovered, never knowing who they can trust. Racism and discrimination were listed by approximately 24% of the respondents as challenges that confront the undocumented student population, including “systematic marginalization”, “indignities no one should have to suffer”, “harassment by law enforcement”, and other types of prejudice.

However, when participants were provided with a list of challenges to indicate whether they believed they were challenges undocumented students have to deal with, most did recognize that students faced many of those presented. In fact, more than half of the respondents indicated that students had to deal with each challenge included in the list. Table 2 below includes the challenges ranked in order of the most frequently identified challenge in survey responses.

Table 2 <i>Challenges Identified by % of respondents</i>	
Challenges	%
Fear of family separation due to deportation	98%
Anxiety over the ability to remain enrolled and complete due to finances	84%
Transportation challenges often due to an inability to obtain a license	82%
Feeling as though they don't belong, and aren't actually welcome on campus	71%
Guilt over not actively contributing to the family's income by working full-time	63%
Shame about their past and their undocumented status	55%

As displayed in Table 2, the most commonly recognized challenge that educators understand students face is the fear they have of being separated from family members due to their own or family members' potential deportation. If educators recognize that this is a challenge that

undocumented students face, they may also understand that it could impact their ability to be successful since fear would interfere with their cognitive bandwidth. Recent research by Schilbach, Schofield, and Mullainathan (2016) regarding the reduction of cognitive bandwidth due to the impact of poverty and the difficulty focusing and learning as a result may be magnified with undocumented students. It is important for educators not only to understand the immediate challenges undocumented students face but also the impact these challenges have and the extra level of determination and resilience demanded that students must possess to be successful.

Desire to Learn More

One key finding that emerged from both quantitative analysis as demonstrated in Figure 5 and qualitative analysis is that the majority of respondents did recognize and express a desire to learn more about the undocumented student population, the challenges they face, and how to best support them. Survey respondents indicate they feel it is valuable, essential even, for them to learn more. An academic support staff member at a large rural institution realized “as someone who works with the NC Community College System and is responsible for having universal knowledge, it’s essential that I’m aware of this information”. One student services staff member at a large rural institution recognized that “researching this topic is probably a good idea so I know how to better advocate for students in the future”. A faculty member at a small rural college described their shock that they don’t have more knowledge about this student population. “I have been teaching for ten years and I can’t believe I don’t know the answers to these questions!”

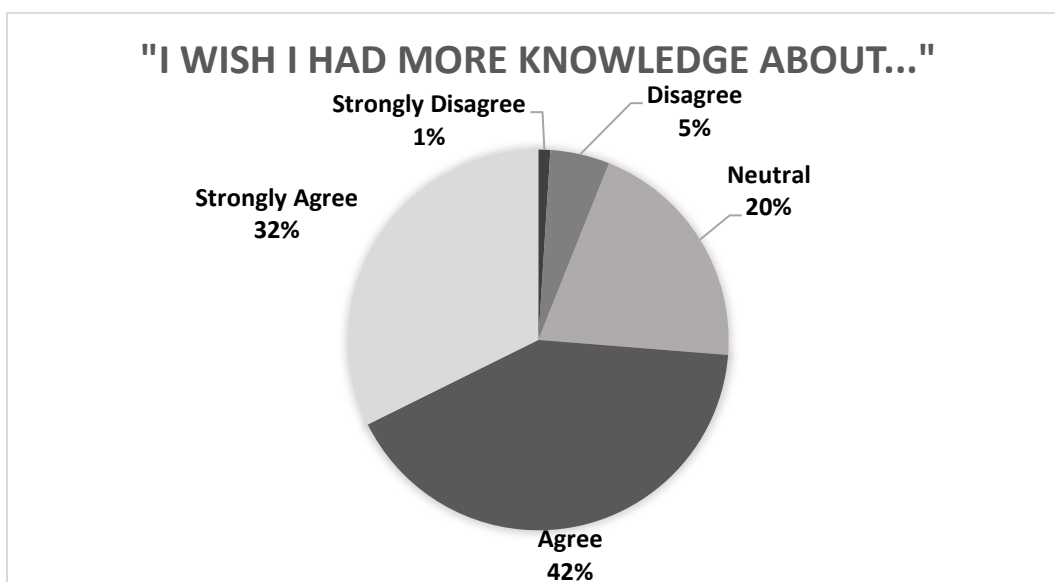


Figure 5. Percentage of respondents indicating they wished they had more knowledge about undocumented students

As displayed in Figure 5 above the finding that approximately 75% of respondents indicate they wish they had more knowledge about undocumented students is significant, and perhaps indicates that community colleges in North Carolina should seek ways of helping the faculty and staff they employ learn more as they have expressed they would like to do. Some recommendations that address this are included in Chapter 6.

2) What attitudes do interviewees who are faculty and staff in the North Carolina Community College system hold toward this student group?

Analysis of survey results revealed that respondents hold divided attitudes toward undocumented students, but the significant finding as displayed in both Figure 6 and Table 3, is that the majority of educators lean towards favorable attitudes. Approximately 60% expressed opinions that undocumented students should be charged in-state tuition but on the contrary, approximately 20% of respondents expressed the opinion that undocumented students should not even be allowed to enroll in college. Table 3 displays the percent of

respondents who rated their agreement with other attitudinal statements. In addition, the majority of respondents, 80% expressed agreement with the positive attitudinal statement that ‘as educators we should help undocumented students cope with the challenges they face’. On another survey item, 63% expressed agreement with the highly positive attitudinal statement that ‘undocumented students are some of our most dedicated students because of all of the challenges they overcome’.

Table 3					
<i>Percentage of survey respondents indicating agreement with attitude statements</i>					
Attitude Statements	% Indicating Agreement				
Undocumented students should be eligible to:	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Apply for and receive financial aid	26%	26%	20%	15%	12%
Pay in-state tuition	37%	24%	15%	10%	14%
Have a pathway to citizenship	63%	24%	6%	1%	5%

As displayed in Table 3 above, while a significant majority of respondents indicated they agreed that undocumented students should have a pathway to citizenship, it should also be noted that while still a majority, a significantly smaller number of respondents indicated agreement that undocumented students should be eligible to receive equal benefits available to in-state students such as in-state tuition and financial aid.

Participants’ responses on each attitudinal item within the survey were aggregated for an overall attitude rating and the range from lowest possible score to highest possible score was divided into quadrants. Figure 6 displays the percentage of respondents whose attitude rating was within each particular quadrant.

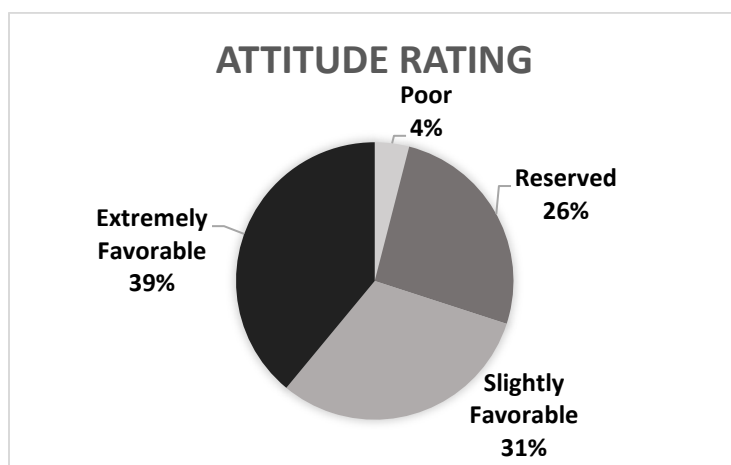


Figure 6. Percentage of respondents within each attitude rating bracket

As displayed in Figure 6 the significant finding is that the majority, approximately 70% of respondents, had favorable attitudes and yet consistent with the finding displayed in Table 3, slightly less than half expressed extremely favorable attitudes.

When I disaggregated the results by institution size, again there were no consistently significant differences among the degree of respondents' positive or negative attitudes as measured by their rating on the attitude scale. There were differences in attitude rating when disaggregating by respondents' role type as represented in Figure 7 below. Academic Support Staff, such as tutors and other professionals in learning centers, reported the most favorable attitudes, followed very closely by Student Services Staff whereas Academic Administrators reported the least favorable attitudes, and adjunct faculty also reported the least favorable attitudes.

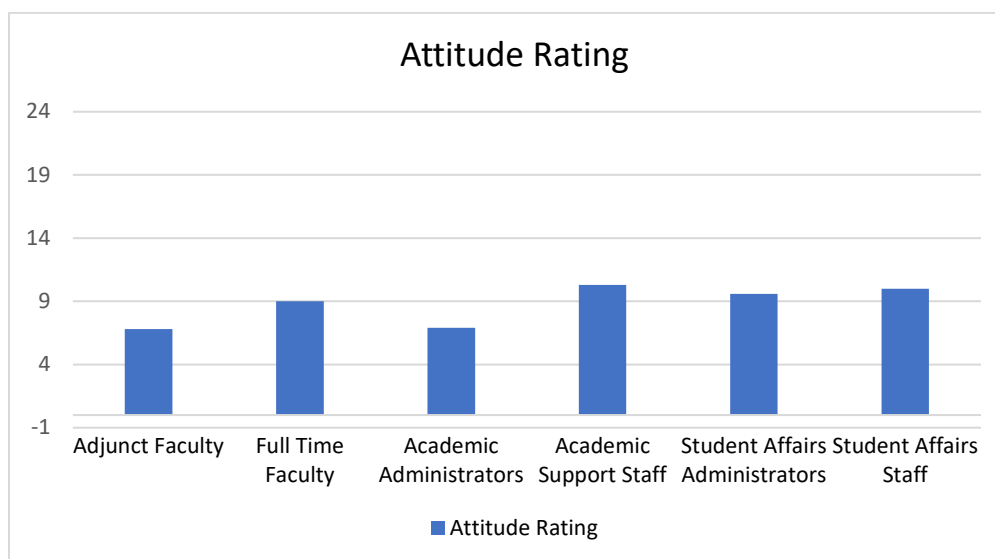


Figure 7. Attitude rating disaggregated by role type

Similar to the finding that adjunct faculty had the lowest knowledge scores they also had the lowest attitude ratings as displayed in Figure 7. Considering the increasing number of adjunct faculty teaching at community colleges in North Carolina, this finding suggests attitudes of adjunct faculty toward undocumented students may need to be addressed, to prevent any negative impact to students in the classroom. But the attitudes of Academic Administrators as they create policies and make other important decisions that may impact undocumented students is a significant finding that certainly merits attention as well.

Empowering vs Restrictive Legislation

One survey question was designed to assess respondents' general attitudes about undocumented students by asking them to indicate their agreement or disagreement with statements about proposed legislation. As displayed in Table 4, analysis of results demonstrated the majority of respondents indicated favorable attitudes as expressed through opposition to negative legislation that would be limiting or damaging to undocumented

students and in favor of positive legislation that would be helpful or empowering for undocumented students.

Table 4			
<i>Percentage of respondents expressing their stance on legislation</i>			
Type of Legislation	Purpose of Legislation	Stance	
Empowering Legislation	Provide all undocumented immigrants who currently reside in the United States, the legal right to stay permanently	Favor	Oppose
		55%	29%
	Allow those who have been granted temporary status through the DACA program to apply for citizenship	87%	8%
	Federal legislation that requires states to charge undocumented students in-state tuition	76%	16%
Restrictive Legislation	Build a wall along the US-Mexico border	17%	72%
	Deport all undocumented immigrants currently in the U.S.	10%	83%
	End the DACA program and remove that temporary protective status	12%	79%
	Deny undocumented immigrants the right to enroll at any US college or university	10%	84%
Note: These percentages do not sum to 100% because there was also a ‘No Opinion’ category that accounts for the remaining participants not represented in the table below.			

One significant finding displayed in Figure 8, is that while a large majority opposed restrictive legislation and expressed favor for the concept of legislation that would allow DACA recipients to have a pathway to citizenship, a smaller majority expressed favor for legislation that would allow students access to in-state tuition. Only slightly more than half of the respondents expressed favor for legislation that would enable all undocumented immigrants to legally stay in the country permanently.

We are all Immigrants

The survey asked participants to summarize their opinion about undocumented students in response to an open-ended question. One attitudinal theme that was present in the open-ended responses was the concept that America was founded by immigrants, “on principles supporting immigration” and as shared by a faculty member at large rural college that “we should welcome all who come to this country, regardless of where they come from”. One student services staff member from a small rural college pointed out the country “would not be in existence if it wasn’t for the abundance of immigrants who come here to make it great” and explained, “Our founding fathers were all undocumented immigrants.” A faculty member from a large urban college expressed the opinion that “anyone who makes the journey to the US should be welcomed and afforded all the opportunities, ... (as is) ... inscribed on the Statue of Liberty”. There were other comments that also expressed the responsibility of the United States America to fulfill the mission of providing for those who arrive to its shores. One adjunct faculty member from a large rural college commented “I think if people are willing to risk everything and leave behind their lives to come here, they have good reasons to do so and the US should do what it can to help them.”

Exclusion based on Scarcity of Resources

In contrast, some respondents expressed opinions aligned with the attitudinal theme of scarce resources that should be reserved for citizens only. An instructional technologist from a small rural college expressed their concern “that anyone could come to our country illegally and receive aid and an education while our own citizens may not be able to receive the same benefits”. Others such as a faculty member from a small rural institution were very explicit in their belief that undocumented students “should not be entitled to any benefits

citizens enjoy”, and “should not be entitled to American funds to attend schools.” Another faculty member from a large rural institution declared the undocumented students decided to “take on the risk of being here and it is not up to citizens to pay for any benefits they want to receive”. ‘Scarcity’ is a theme that has clearly emerged from the racist nativism present in other studies as well (Suarez Orozco et al, 2015; Muñoz & Vigil, 2018). It did seem that many of the respondent’s opinions were motivated by the concern for resource scarcity as one academic administrator from a small rural college stated “I do not want to see current residents lose opportunities because of undocumented students. I believe those who have established residency, paid taxes, and have a longer history of investment in public institutions should not be denied in order to allow undocumented students to attend” and an adjunct faculty from a small rural institution stated “The country and the school does not have unlimited resources. We cannot take in and provide for the rest of the world.” This response illuminates the ‘othering’ that occurs, as these participants marginalize and dehumanize undocumented students, viewing them as less worthy and undeserving, and this attitude contributes to the liminality undocumented students often experience (Benuto et al, 2018; Chen & Rhoads, 2016; Raza et al, 2018). Others were more empathetic to the students’ situation, recognizing such as a faculty member from a large urban institution “they not be morally culpable for their status” but that “when it comes to allocating aid, scholarships, and so forth, hard choices have to be made. Their status may not be their fault, but we have to have priorities and those living within the law should take priority over those living outside it.”

The Immigration System is Broken

Some respondents who indicated more favorable attitudes toward the undocumented student population, recognized the United States has “a broken immigration system that needs to be fixed” that “fails all parties, the undocumented individuals, U.S. citizens, and the country in general” and expressed their frustration. As one student services administrator at a small rural college wrote, “we make it nearly impossible for them to understand, navigate, afford, and meet the requirements. Many people state they should do the stuff they need to do to ‘become legal’ without any understanding whatsoever ...that we make it impossible”. Other descriptors respondents used to describe the immigration system include “systemically flawed”, “thoroughly screwed up”, and “bourgeois nonsense” that is “disgusting and inhumane”. Respondents also describe the persecution they believe undocumented students face as one faculty member from a small urban college stated they are “scapegoats for all this country’s challenges” that “when we need them we use them up and then deny their existence”, and that as an adjunct faculty at a small rural institution declared “our country exploits them and spits them out when we no longer need them”.

Pathway to Citizenship: Making a Positive Contribution to Society

A significant number of respondents indicated they believe as one faculty member at a large urban institution stated that there should be “a realistic and viable path to citizenship for undocumented individuals”. Respondents indicated that these “lawful routes to citizenship” should be “reasonable to attain” but many did explain that those pathways should include requirements such as “fines and back taxes”, “a period of documented residency” and “background checks”. One faculty member at a small rural college expressed their opinion that “the U.S. should accept as many immigrants as possible, barring only those

who have previously committed a violent crime” and an academic support staff member at a small rural college stated their opinion that “there is a difference between crossing the border illegally/overstaying a Visa and committing a major crime”. In addition to a pathway to citizenship, respondents who expressed favorable attitudes, expressed their belief that undocumented students should also receive the “benefits that US citizens currently receive corresponding to higher education and other services” so that “the contributions these individuals make to our economy and society can be fully realized.” This theme of education being the key to enable undocumented immigrants “to become the productive citizens they have the potential and desire to be” so they “can contribute to the well-being of their communities and to our state as a whole” was present in numerous responses. Respondents such as one adjunct faculty at a small urban institution explained

It makes economic sense to train and educate those within our borders as such measures can prevent larger expenditures. Repeated studies have shown that paying for a well-trained and well-educated population is cheaper by far than paying for the services needed when that same population is untrained and uneducated. Denying them this or making it harder to obtain because of cost not only hinders their future success but ultimately hinders society as a whole because it means less ‘educated’ (not that education is the sole deciding factor is a productive worker) workers in the job field.

In addition to economic benefits immigrants bring to society, some respondents such as student services staff member at a small rural college also expressed cultural benefits, that “diversity makes us strong.” These survey responses clearly indicate participants’ positive attitudes based on the valuable contribution they believe undocumented students make to

North Carolina and their belief that this should entitle them to the same benefits received by every other North Carolina resident.

Human Beings Among Us

Other respondents such as one student services staff member at a small rural college emphasized the human rights aspect as they expressed their opinions that “all people should be able to better themselves through education.” One faculty member from a large rural college explicitly stated, “I believe undocumented students and families are first and foremost human beings.” Another adjunct faculty member from a small urban college expressed inclusion, “They live, work, play and shop in our communities and they should be supported as members of our community” that “are seeking a safe place to raise their family where they can earn a decent wage and offer a future to their children”. Respondents explained their observation that undocumented students “are no different than any other student other than their legal status”, that they “are just as hardworking and dedicated to their goals” and that “they should not be denied based on a piece of paper”, that “treating them differently is discriminatory”. One faculty member from a small urban college stated “Undocumented students should be allowed to study and be successful. Their success is my success. And it isn't us and them as my wording suggests. We are one. It is our obligation as humans to care for each other.” These survey responses reflect a recognition of the overly emphasized and unnecessarily inflated difference that is based merely on the lack of documentation, when there is in reality an abundance of shared similarities because we are all human and therefore undocumented students deserve equal human rights.

They Committed a Crime

In contrast other respondents emphasized the “illegality” of undocumented students who have “committed a crime” by “sneaking into our country” and therefore “should be deported”. One academic administrator at a large rural college strongly expressed their opinion, “I am against undocumented individuals utilizing American education dollars to attend school and feel they should be deported along with their parents. While I feel for their situation, the fact remains, they entered illegally.” Other studies have had similar findings, that immigrants have been “racialized systematically as a minority group with problems” and labeled as “lawbreakers, job-stealers, welfare queens, and anti-American” (Gallagher & Lippard, 2011, p.7). Another respondent questioned “Why should people get to choose to break our laws with no consequence? Does that mean I can also choose what laws I do and do not want to comply with?” One tutor at a large urban college objected to the survey altogether stating “The question we should be asking is, why are undocumented immigrants allowed to enroll at a community college? They are undocumented, they are here illegally. That is a federal crime. It does not matter why they are here, the point is they are doing it illegally. So, the fact that we are supporting them and even allowing them to come to school and receive aid, really undermines our current laws which say that it is wrong to be here undocumented... (They) are breaking our laws by being here in the first place, so allowing them to go to school and giving them our tax dollars for financial aid to go to school is ridiculous.” These responses are consistent with findings in other studies (Stebbleton & Alexio, 2015; Munñoz & Vigil, 2018; Chen & Rhoads, 2016; Benuto et al, 2018) and reveal the racist nativism that does exist even within North Carolina community colleges. This

racialized discourse using ‘illegality’ as a proxy serves to justify the discrimination towards this undocumented student population by dehumanizing and criminalizing them.

Mixed Attitudes, Making Sense of the ‘Gray’

Some respondents did not clearly express favorable or negative attitudes, but instead opinions that were conditional; that undocumented students should be eligible for rights to education and pathways to citizenship if they met certain criteria. One student services staff member at a small rural college expressed their mixed opinions

I feel conflicted about the plight of undocumented students. I can see both sides of the argument: one being the necessity of having a legal process for non-citizens that is enforceable and fair to current citizens the other being the individual cases of these students, their uphill battles, and the prejudices against them. I'm not sure what the right answer is, but I do think it would be helpful to have more information on how I can assist undocumented students.

A faculty member at a small rural college explained their uncertainty about whether undocumented students should be entitled to any benefits,

For me, these issues have a lot of ‘gray’ area. I see a lot of valid arguments both for and against educating undocumented students. This population fills a lot of niches in our economy that others are unwilling to fill, and most of the time these are hard-working individuals who just want the same opportunity that my ancestors wanted when they immigrated 200 years ago. I do believe in equal access to education, but who should pay for it? How is it fair for someone who doesn't pay taxes to benefit from things like in-state tuition and federal financial aid? This is a hard discussion to have because it is difficult to find the line between human decency and fairness.

These conflicted opinions also demonstrate the low levels of accurate knowledge as it becomes clear that these respondents don't understand for instance that many undocumented immigrant families do indeed pay taxes and often more than U.S. citizens since they are unable to claim refunds. According to a report from the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy (Gee, Gardner, & Wiehe, 2017) undocumented immigrants across the United States pay an estimated 9 billion dollars in federal taxes and an estimated \$11.64 billion in state and local taxes annually. The same report estimates that if undocumented immigrants were granted a pathway to citizenship, that amount would be increased by 2.1 billion. Specifically, the report indicates that undocumented immigrants pay approximately \$275.8 million in North Carolina taxes which would increase by an estimated \$92.7 million if there was a pathway to citizenship. Undocumented students who have been granted DACA pay an average of 8.3% of their income in taxes, a tax rate higher than the top 1% of taxpayers, and if DACA status is repealed, there would be an estimated loss of \$700 million (Hill and Wiehe, 2018). These statistics debunk the overstated myth that undocumented immigrants receive benefits they don't pay the taxes to support and in fact provide the evidence that the converse is true, that they often pay taxes to support benefits they are not eligible to receive.

Respondents with mixed opinions also emphasized the students' innocence that it had been their parents' choice to come and the students themselves shouldn't be held responsible. One respondent who was an early college liaison at a small urban institution explained their opinion,

I do not feel that children that were brought to the US by their parents and successfully graduate from an American high school should be punished by not being able to attend or afford college. Many of the undocumented students I know want to

be productive citizens and want to make their lives better for themselves and their families. I am heartbroken when the door is slammed in their face when they realize they cannot afford a college education or cannot obtain the type of degree they were hoping for.

Similarly, other respondents expressed their desire to teach all students in their class regardless of status, and without forming strong opinions. As one faculty member from a small rural college stated, “given the partisan nature of the issue, I haven't been able to find enough unbiased information to form a complete opinion on what immigration policy would be most beneficial to the most number of people” One adjunct faculty member from a small rural college expressed “If a student comes to my class I will teach that student. It’s what I do; I teach.” and another explained “I do not ask about a student’s status. If the college lets them in, then they belong.” These survey responses seem to reflect an intentional decision to ignore students’ status, perhaps because they have conflicting opinions about the broader issue of undocumented immigration. They may even subconsciously recognize the cognitive dissonance created by the differences in the stereotypes they may hold toward the abstract identity of ‘undocumented immigrant’ and the real identity of the undocumented student sitting in their classroom or attending their institution. Their response is to choose to ignore the students’ status, which as will be discussed later in this dissertation, forces the student to feel as though they must ‘hide’ their status.

More Knowledge Correlated with More Favorable Attitudes

One key finding was the relationship revealed by the results of the quantitative bivariate analysis comparing the knowledge level and attitude rating scales that demonstrated a positive correlation. There was a moderate correlation coefficient of .525 between the more

knowledge respondents possess about undocumented students, based on their knowledge level score, and the more favorable their attitude, and this finding is displayed in Figure 8 below.

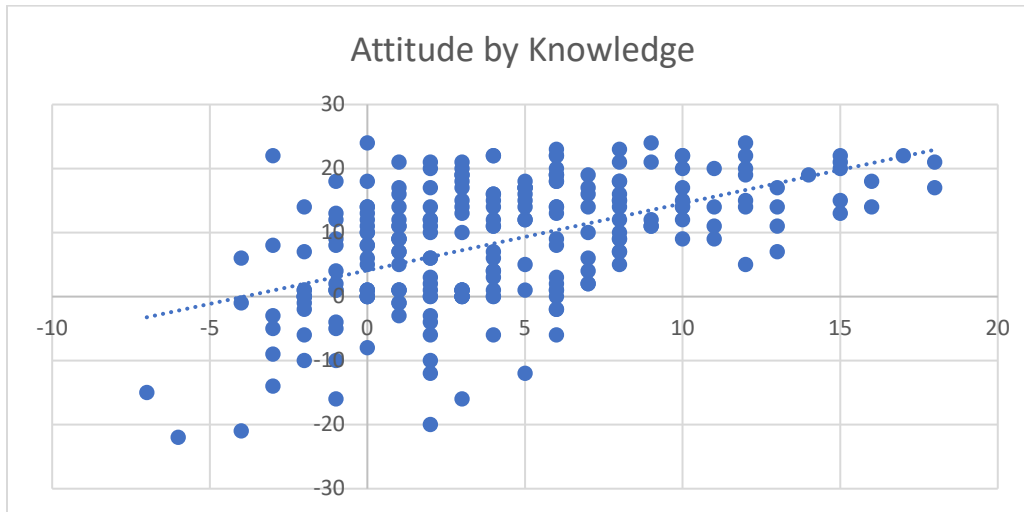


Figure 8. Relationship between respondent's knowledge score and their attitude rating

The significant finding as displayed in Figure 8 above demonstrates that respondents with more knowledge tend to have more favorable attitudes than those with less knowledge. This may indicate that as also demonstrated in the qualitative responses that as educators learn more about undocumented students they are more likely to have favorable attitudes toward this student population. However it is important to note that since correlation does not necessarily indicate causation, it could also be that educators with more positive attitudes are more likely to seek out and engage in opportunities to learn more about the student population, thus resulting in higher levels of knowledge.

3) How do participants perceive any contact they've had with undocumented students and how do they perceive that contact has impacted their knowledge and attitudes?

Analysis of the survey items designed to determine the level of contact respondents had with the undocumented student population revealed approximately half of the respondents did have some level of contact. An average 50% of respondents across those items answered affirmatively that they either personally knew a student or other individual that was undocumented. The two items that asked if respondents had any personal experience with immigration themselves or within their family, indicated that less than 10% were first or second-generation immigrants. But approximately 58% of respondents indicated that a student had previously discussed their immigration status and challenges they faced as result of their immigration status. One key finding was that while less than half of participants, approximately 48%, indicated they had 'many' undocumented students enrolled at their institution, 84% indicated they did have some (at least one) undocumented students enrolled. The scaled scores calculated from survey responses assessing level of contact divided the participants into four categories, minimal, low, moderate, or high, and the percentage of respondents in each category are displayed in Figure 9.

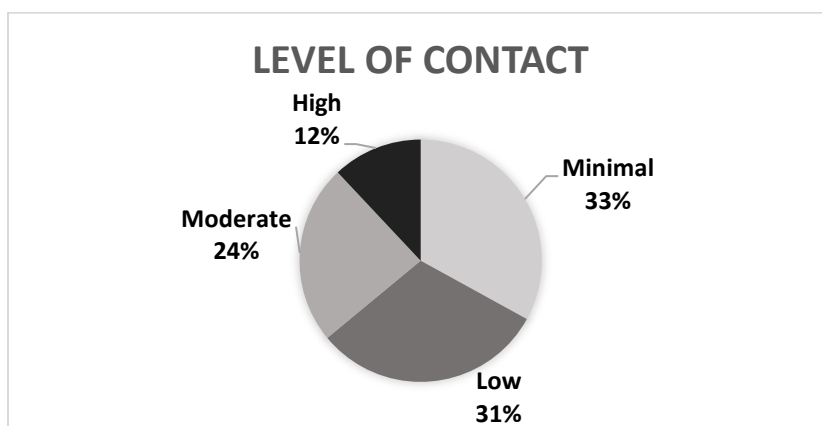


Figure 9. Respondent's level of contact as measured by 'contact scale'

The significant finding in Figure 9 is the small number of respondents who reported having contact with undocumented students. Approximately 64% reported low or minimal contact and yet the majority indicated they were aware they had undocumented students enrolled in their institution. This finding may indicate a need to explore opportunities where educators could have, or be made more explicitly aware of, contact they have with undocumented students.

When I disaggregated results by institution type, there were no significant differences, the respondents from large rural institutions reported slightly higher levels of contact, and respondents from large urban institutions reported slightly lower levels of contact.

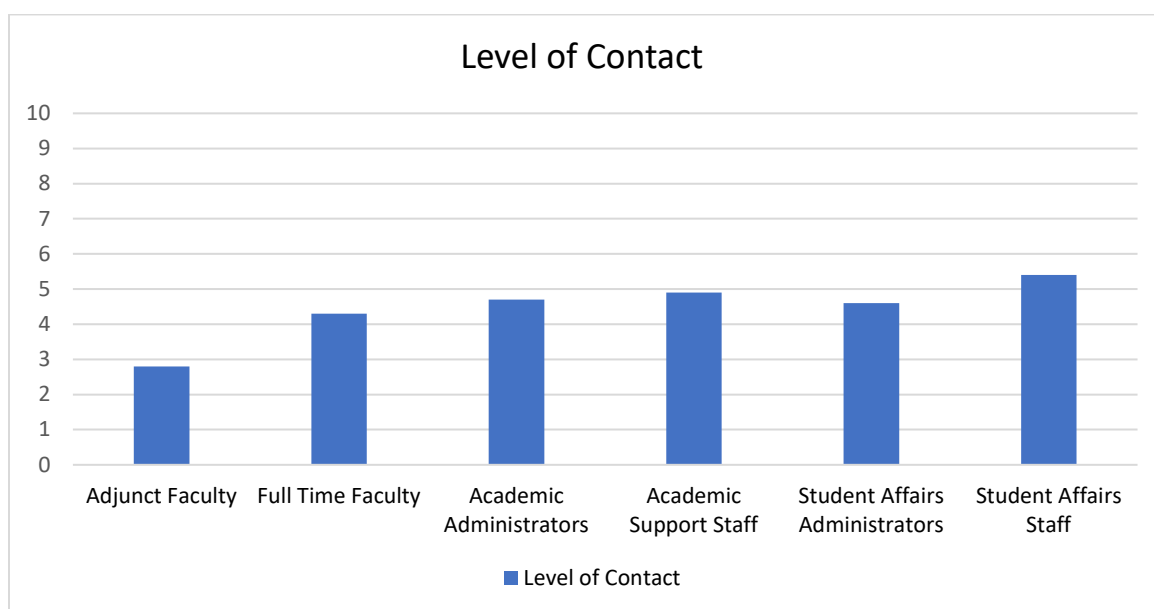


Figure 10. Level of contact disaggregated by role type

As shown in Figure 10 the significant finding reveals that the same trend identified with knowledge levels and degree of favorable attitudes, was also present with the different levels of contact by respondents' role at the institution. Student Services reported higher levels of

contact, especially Student Services Staff, which is logical as one considers the advising and counseling conversations these professionals have with students, as they help them cope with barriers to their success. Adjunct faculty reported significantly lower levels of contact with undocumented students than any of the other respondent groups.

How has contact impacted undocu-competence?

A high number of respondents included descriptions of how their personal experience and encounters with undocumented students has impacted their beliefs. One academic support staff member at a small urban college explained “My personal interaction leads me to know these students have hopes, dreams, and fears like the rest of us” and stated “There is a difference between a criminal and a desperate necessity for safety and a better future. Illegal immigration is a crime but that doesn’t mean the person who did it is a criminal.”

Respondents described the positive attributes they’d observed in undocumented students that contributed to their positive attitudes toward the student population, as “Some of the best students we have”, who are “hard-working and dedicated to their studies, often more than their peers from the US. They’re often my favorite students to teach.” As respondents explained the characteristics of undocumented students, as “the hardest working and most involved. They want badly to learn, and they are eager to complete their education and help their families. I see no reason to stifle that.” Others described the barriers the students faced, “These students were some of the best and brightest in my class, and they were not allowed to apply for scholarships and follow the same path as a traditional student in their class.” One faculty member at a small rural college described how their opinion about undocumented immigrants changed after having them as students, “Before my time as an ELA instructor, I don’t remember having a strong feeling about immigration one way or the other. My

experiences with this population were limited. It didn't take very long at all for me to form a very strong connection and genuine care for these amazing people. I strongly believe that these good, law-abiding people should be granted the opportunity for citizenship.” Another emphasized “They want to be here, want to excel here, and we should give them that opportunity.” Again, these survey responses also seem to describe the contrast between the stereotypes of the undocumented immigrant as often presented in the all too common and widely spread anti-immigrant rhetoric, and the actual undocumented students faculty and staff interact with at their institution.

A high number of respondents indicated that contact had changed their beliefs about undocumented students. One respondent stated

Because of my work at the community college, my stance on immigration has changed. I used to believe it was really frustrating that someone would be in our country ‘illegally’ and would be ‘taking advantage’ of our resources. As a direct result of my interaction with my students, though, I have completely changed my mind. So many know NOTHING about their country of origin and speak only English (or speak it much better than some native speakers!).

A student services staff member at a large rural college explained “I was very neutral to their situation until I had a very close and personal experience with the documentation process.” A student services administrator at a large urban college described “I was able to ask questions, hear their voices, see their lives, learn of their commitment to this country.” One respondent stated very explicitly “Having the personal contact has definitely influenced my opinion of about this population because I can see what wonderful people they are and how sincere and genuine they are in their want to become active and intelligent members of our society.”

Respondents also described the impact that contact had as it motivated them to learn more, “Speaking with students ... (has made me) ... interested to learn more about DACA and processes.” As these faculty and staff have shared, their contact with undocumented students enables them to recognize the positive attributes of undocumented students, increasing their favorable attitudes toward the student population, and often motivates them to seek opportunities to learn more, thus increasing their undocu-competence.

Contact with undocumented students helped respondents by providing human faces to the issue who “are very kind, bright, individuals who are looking for opportunity, just like everyone else” and whose “stories of hardship, struggle and perseverance are inspiring”. Respondents discuss how the contact they’ve had with undocumented students has helped them to recognize their worth and reject stereotypes, because they’ve seen their hard work and dedication and believe they deserve opportunities. One student services staff member at a small rural college shared

I personally have witnessed their hard work and dedication to make the best out of circumstances they themselves did not fully choose. I know personally that they are just as intelligent and willing to strive and achieve their very best, but face so many obstacles that it makes it hard for them to truly go after their goals. And no one should stand in the way of one’s potential.

One academic support staff member at a large urban institution recalls

The students I know of were working even harder to succeed in schools, were more dedicated to learning and the promise of a life enhanced by education. They modeled all the goals instructors and administrators claimed they wanted to see in a student

population, and so seemed ‘worthy’ of the benefits offered by education rather than ‘stealing’ or ‘tricking’ the system, which other people seem worried about when speaking of undocumented immigration.

An adjunct faculty at a small rural college described the contact he’s had with undocumented immigrants since childhood

Some of my best friends were raised by parents who never told them that they were brought here when they were three years old. They’ve never been to their country of citizenship, but they held jobs, paid taxes, and stayed out of trouble with the law. Clearly this influenced me growing up, these people were a far cry from someone sneaking across the desert of Arizona.

Respondents state that undocumented immigrants “bring a diversity of knowledge, experience and insight to the table, and should be given the opportunity to contribute.” One academic administrator at a large rural college emphasized “Knowing a student in this situation makes all the difference in the world. We need to keep putting a face on this problem. I am conscious of resources, but it’s hard to say no to a human face.” These survey responses certainly suggest that the contact these educators had with undocumented students directly impacted their development of undocu-competence.

In addition to asking participants about their perception of how the contact they have had with undocumented students has impacted them, I also conducted quantitative analysis to determine how the level of contact respondents have had with undocumented students was related to their undocu-competence scores on the knowledge and attitude scales.

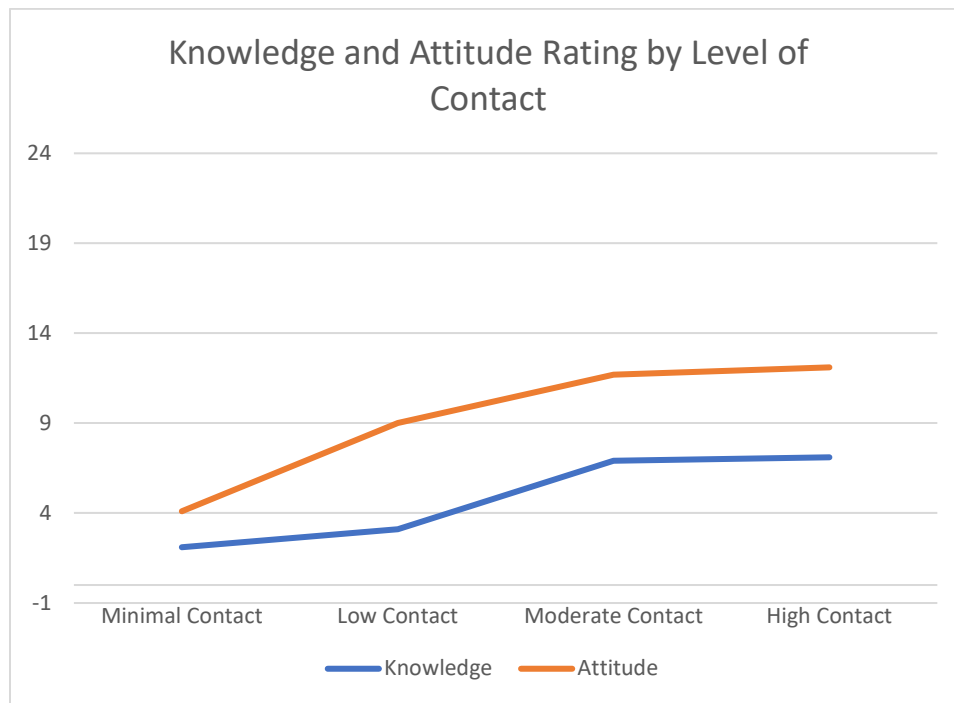


Figure 11. Respondent's knowledge score and attitude rating by 'level of contact' bracket

While certainly making no claims of causality, the trend line in Figure 11 above demonstrates that respondents who indicated high levels of contact, with their contact scores in the upper bracket had the most knowledge and the most favorable attitudes toward undocumented students. Respondents who had minimal contact with undocumented students demonstrated less favorable attitudes and lower levels of knowledge about this student population.

There was a positive relationship as displayed in Figure 12 and Figure 13 with a moderate correlation coefficient of .405 between the level of contact participants had with undocumented immigrants and their knowledge level, and a weaker correlation coefficient of .308. between the level of contact and the strength of participants' positive attitudes toward the students.

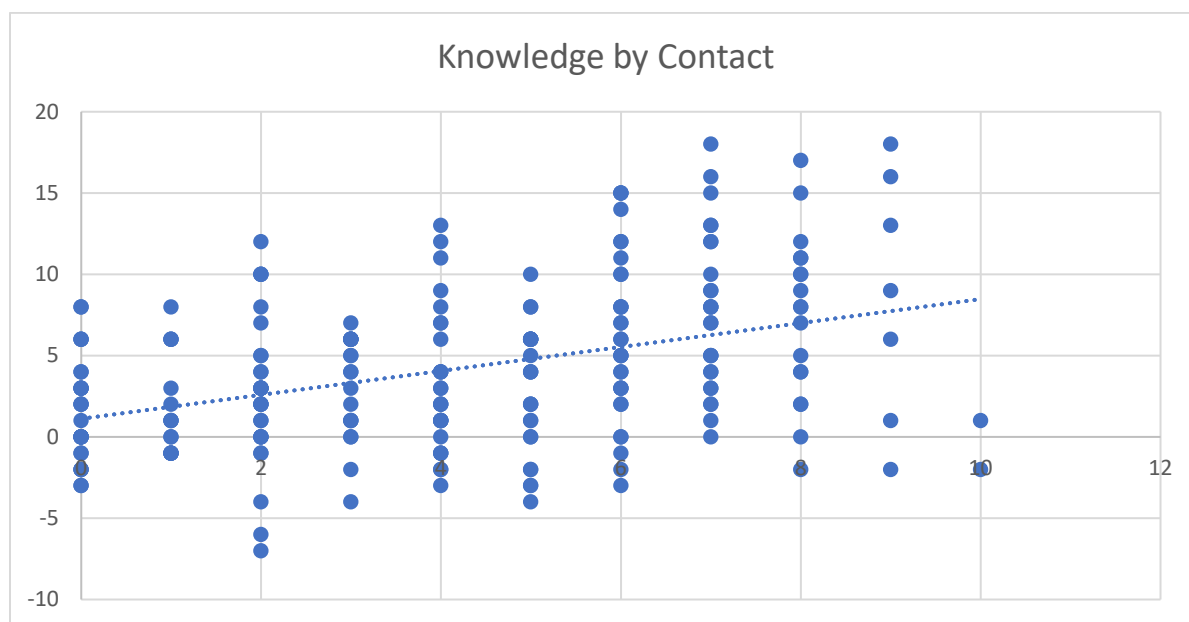


Figure 12. Relationship between respondent's knowledge score and their level of contact with undocumented students

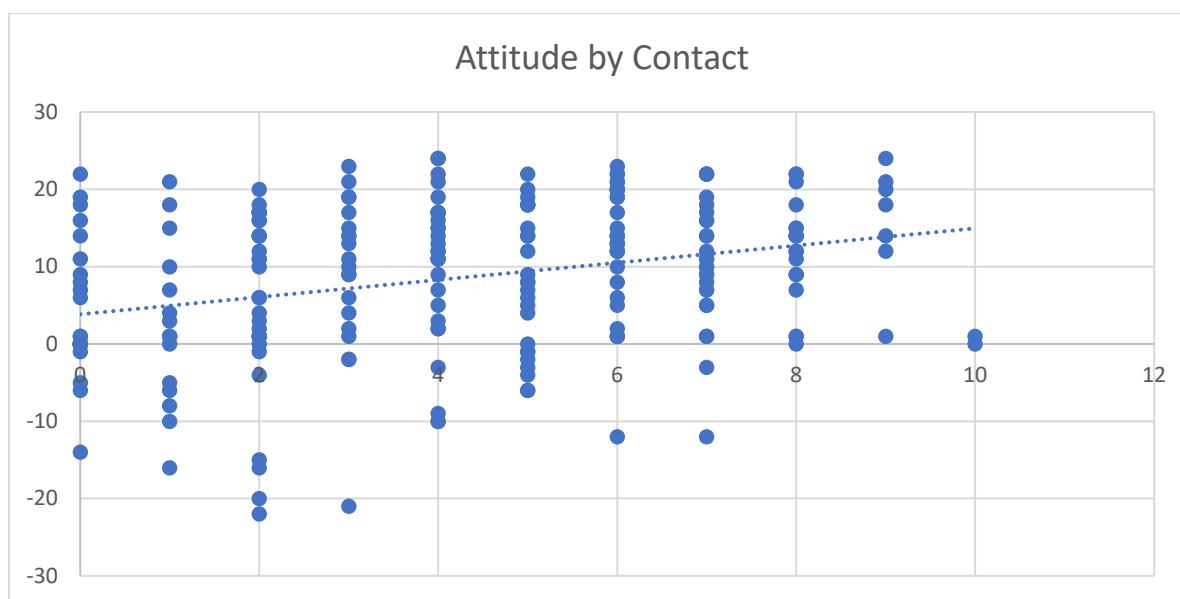


Figure 13. Relationship between respondent's attitude rating and their level of contact with undocumented students

Figure 12 and Figure 13 also display that increased levels of contact are correlated with more positive attitudes and higher knowledge. This finding may at least suggest that providing increased opportunities for educators to have contact with undocumented students may increase their level of knowledge and degree of favorable attitudes. This quantitative finding corresponds to the similar qualitative finding as respondents described the impact of the contact they had with undocumented students.

Contact does not always have positive impact

In contrast though, some respondents described negative encounters that reinforced stereotypes, or led to further mistrust such as their perception of undocumented immigrants' limited ability and seeming unwillingness to learn English. Others described positive experience with the contact they've had with undocumented students but state that emotion should not impact opinions, "I have had students in my classes who were undocumented. While I feel for them, it does not change my feelings on their illegal status." A faculty member at a large rural institution commented "I have worked with illegal immigrant students and my heart goes out to them and their situation. However, laws are necessary for a reason and if they are breaking the law, there should be consequences." Another faculty member at a small rural college shared specifically

I know one DACA student. I feel they are in a tough situation, but the US shouldn't be handing out all of our money to people that aren't citizens. I pay a lot of taxes and it shouldn't go to everyone in the world. If you want to get help from the US, then you are going to have to be a US citizen.

Respondents also described how they interacted with individual students despite their negative attitudes toward undocumented immigrants more generally

I listen in kindness I cannot fault the law enforcement for upholding the law. I also strongly believe that individuals are responsible for the consequences that their actions incur. It means I am kind, but I don't condone. It means I can sympathize, but I don't excuse. It also means that for those who don't pay taxes, they shouldn't benefit from services that are paid for by taxes.

As already discussed commonly believed myths are present as embedded assumptions within these responses, such as the false statement that undocumented students do not pay taxes. Perhaps for some of these respondents, their negative attitudes toward the undocumented immigrant population is so deeply ingrained in their consciousness that they disregard the positive contact they may have with undocumented students, holding strong to the stereotypes and myths they have always believed in.

Unaware of Any Contact

Some respondents did indicate they had not encountered any experiences or contact with undocumented students, and other respondents don't know if they have had any contact. One adjunct faculty member at a small rural institution commented "I do not know if I have come into contact with any illegal immigrants. It is not something that typically comes up in conversation, nor do I ask people if they are here legally or not." Similarly, another stated "While I know there are undocumented students who study at my institution, I haven't had any direct conversations with any undocumented students about their status. It's not something I would ever bring up with a student, but if a student brought it up to me, I'd

listen.” One faculty member shared that they treat all students equally and aren’t concerned with students’ status, “My institution has a large population of immigrant students, but I am unaware of any (of) their documentation status. If they come through the door of my classroom and their name is on the roster, I can only assume they have a right to be there and I treat them no different from any other student.” Unfortunately, this attitude while it may not appear directly discriminatory may reflect abstract liberalism, a component of color-blind racism, through the myth of meritocracy, that ignores the inequity (Bonilla-Silva, 2014). Students’ status and the barriers in their way to success as a result of their status, result in a denial of equal rights and impact these students in this faculty member’s classroom whether or not they choose to recognize or ignore it.

Some respondents recognize the risk that would be involved if students disclosed their status, “This is pretty much a 'don't ask, don't tell' situation. I am willing to talk with undocumented students, but I am aware that they might feel at risk if they talk to authority figures”. They expressed they feel it is “not my business” to ask and that it would be intrusive, “My experience with undocumented students is largely unknown to me. This is based in the fact that I never inquire about citizenship status because I feel it intrusive. Also, I have had only one student allude to not being a citizen. The limited exposure leaves me without much first-hand accounting of the lived experiences of people who are undocumented.” Respondents also commented that it wasn’t a topic that was discussed, “I don't treat students any differently based on their citizenship status. We probably have undocumented students here, but I don't recall much being said about it.” These survey responses indicate these faculty and staff most likely feel they are respecting students’ privacy and honoring their identity as a student beyond their undocumented status. Yet,

recent research conducted with undocumented students as participants has indicated that this intentional avoidance of students' status as a key part of their identity because of the challenges they face as a result is harmful not helpful and this will be discussed in later chapters in more detail (Munoz & Vigil, 2018)

4) How do participants provide validation to undocumented students?

Yet when participants were asked about any professional development their institution may offer to equip faculty and staff with the knowledge and resources they need to assist the undocumented students enrolled at their institution, less than half of respondents, approximately 40% indicated their institution had ever offered any type of information session or training opportunities. Of the respondents within that 40%, only 25% indicated they had been able to attend, and 4% indicated they deliberately chose not to attend the session that was offered. When respondents were explicitly asked whether their college offered specific opportunities for faculty and staff to learn about the challenges undocumented students face, only 10% agreed that they did. One key finding is that 78% believe their college should offer more opportunities for faculty and staff to learn how they can support these students.

When participants were asked to identify any support strategies their institution currently offered to assist the undocumented students that were enrolled, 73% of respondents indicated they were not aware that their college offered any support strategies. The most frequent strategy indicated by 23% of respondents that their institution did offer is a dedicated person on staff that can assist with questions and help undocumented students through the enrollment process. The list of strategies included in the survey question were based on best practices by NACADA for working with undocumented students and other studies that have

made recommendations for best practices (Wangensteen, 2017; Fairfield University, 2013).

The following chart displays the support strategies in order of frequency that respondents indicated are currently offered among the 32 colleges where they are employed:

Table 5 <i>Support strategies offered by the college to assist undocumented students</i>	
Support Strategies	%
Dedicated person on staff that can assist with questions and help undocumented students through the enrollment process	23%
Professional Development for Faculty and Staff about undocumented students	17%
A Resource Center where Undocumented students can be referred for assistance	16%
Club or student organization that provides support for undocumented students	15%
Faculty and Staff who have Undocu-Ally Posters placed in their offices	10%
Information sessions for students, faculty, staff where undocumented students could share	10%
Information Sessions in local HS presented by College staff with undocumented students	7%

The significant finding displayed in Table 5 is that even the most frequently noted support strategy offered on a community college campus was only identified by 23% as being present on their campus. This strategy was simply that there was at least one person on campus who could assist undocumented students. The qualitative findings also similarly included comments by participants, but while some of them were able to identify that specific individual, others stated that they just assumed there must be someone knowledgeable enough who could assist the students. Only 17% of respondents indicated their institution provided professional development for their faculty and staff. This finding certainly suggests this may be an area that needs attention from community college leaders, as will be discussed later in Chapter 6.

One academic administrator from a small urban institution expressed negative sentiment toward undocumented students by posing this question in response to the survey items asking

about support strategies provided by the institution “What if we had a student having issues in college because they are afraid the police would arrest them for a burglary they committed during the summer, should the community college actively develop programs to help that student avoid prosecution?”. Yet others expressed positive attitudes within comments to the same set of survey items, as they expressed dissatisfaction that their college does not offer more support. An Academic Support Staff member from a large urban institution stated, “It’s a shame that the college does so little for these students” and another stated “I didn’t realize many of these (*the support strategies embedded as choices within the survey item prompt*) were options available to schools. Clearly my school, despite serving a large population of undocumented students, has little interest in carving out a dedicated space for them”. Other respondents expressed understanding that the college has to “tread carefully on the issue given the politics in the state legislature” and that the support is sometimes offered “in an under-the-table, secretive way” in order to protect the students. Similarly, an academic administrator from a small urban institution described faculty and staff who “discretely help this population” because “Discretion is important as we have other faculty who may turn in these students”. This type of undercover advocacy that faculty and staff and sometimes institutional leaders engage in offers a means of raising awareness and providing support, while protecting students’ identity, and protecting advocates from potential risks involved in their advocacy.

5) Do participants currently serve as allies for undocumented students and if so what types of supportive practices or advocacy initiatives are they engaged in?

When participants were asked to identify whether they were an ally for undocumented students and whether they were actively engaged in any advocacy, 62% identified as an ally not necessarily actively involved, but only 31% identified as an active advocate. However only 10% expressed disagreement with the statement that they were an ally with the others indicating a ‘neutral’ response. Unfortunately, although a third of the respondents indicated they were actively involved in advocacy, only 27 respondents elaborated to share the specific advocacy activities they engaged in. The advocacy activities they described include providing support and encouragement, praising successes, and celebrating accomplishments. Some respondents described the time they spent engaged in empathetic listening as students shared challenges and fears. Others explained how they assist students navigate financial barriers, assisting students in their search for scholarships, providing reference letters, and suggesting most affordable options for courses and programs such as dual enrollment. A few respondents provide support that goes beyond the college, helping students by writing letters for court cases, DACA applications, or as one academic administrator from a small urban college shared, “helping students request excused absences when ICE is in town”. A couple of respondents described their efforts to build community and family partnerships that are helpful for the undocumented students they encounter such as the Career and College Promise Coordinator who conducted “bilingual parent sessions at the local high schools about the intricacies of the enrollment process”. One student services administrator at a small rural institution engages their colleagues in discussion about additional support they can provide for the undocumented student population at their college and creates “bulletin

board campaigns” to increase knowledge and awareness. It is positive practices like these that can be shared with other educators to expand advocacy for undocumented students within the North Carolina community colleges.

Summary of Key Findings from Survey Responses

One strong key finding from survey results was the extensive lack of knowledge about the undocumented student population even among advocates, and the majority of participants expressed a desire to learn more about these students and the challenges they faced. Respondents did not understand the challenges confronting students well enough to self-generate them but when given a list could identify which of those challenges students faced. Another key finding was that a slight majority of respondents held favorable attitudes, and respondents expressed that since we are all immigrants, we should be welcoming and accepting of newly arrived immigrants. But in contrast some respondents who expressed negative attitudes described beliefs about ‘scarcity of resources’ that should be conserved for citizens. However other respondents provided comments suggesting that undocumented students should not be blamed but rather, the fault lies with the broken immigration system. Some survey respondents also described their beliefs that most undocumented immigrants would make a positive contribution to society and therefore should have the rights and the opportunity to do so, such as a pathway to citizenship. Another finding from the open-ended survey responses were that while some respondents emphasized that undocumented students are humans and deserve the same rights we are all entitled to as human beings, other open-ended survey responses emphasized the criminality of the undocumented status, often using the term ‘illegal’.

One finding that emerged from the survey responses is that at least half of participants had some contact with undocumented students, and while slightly less than half indicated they had ‘many’ undocumented students enrolled at their institution, 84%, indicated they did have ‘at least one’ undocumented students enrolled. There was a positive correlation between all three dimensions, knowledge, attitude, and level of contact and rich description within the open-ended responses of how educators’ direct contact with undocumented students has positively impacted their attitudes toward these students. While slightly more than half of respondents identified as allies for undocumented students, only a little over a fourth of respondents reported being active advocates and only a small percentage elaborated on the specific types of advocacy they were engaged in, such as providing support to individual students, raising awareness among colleagues and their community, and in some cases political advocacy. The majority of respondents indicated they believed their institutions should provide more professional development than they currently do which is minimal, but that their institution did not currently offer any support strategies for undocumented students.

It is also interesting to note one other important finding when the scores were disaggregated, that the knowledge and attitude rating were lowest among adjunct faculty. Adjunct faculty also reported lower levels of contact, but one might wonder if that is indeed the case that there truly are fewer encounters or whether instead this finding is influenced by fewer strategies of engagement in the classroom or less possibility of contact due to reduced office hours. Adjunct faculty based on their assignment, do not have a steady presence on campus like full time faculty or student services who have a permanent office. Students may be less likely to disclose since they don’t have the opportunity to stop by their office privately, outside of class time.

Chapter 5

Insights gained from Interviews

During the follow-up interviews I used a semi-structured interview guide that was intentionally designed to solicit participant responses that were mapped to individual research questions. However, this guide was used flexibly to allow for natural conversation flow and not artificially stifle interviewees desired contribution to any particular question. Although a more narrow group of participants were strategically selected to engage in the interview process, and I was able to probe more deeply, the findings were very similar to those that emerged from survey responses. This chapter is organized thematically based on those themes that emerged during the qualitative coding process.

Limited Knowledge Levels Across Campus, Even Among Advocates

I wish I knew more

Although a few interviewees said they had moderate to high levels of knowledge about undocumented students, most discussed wishing they had more knowledge or feelings of inadequate information to assist students as much as they preferred. Interviewees expressed feeling they could be more effective advocates if they had more knowledge. In response to the interview question about whether participants would consider themselves to be an ally for undocumented students, one academic administrator from a large rural college responded “I think it depends on how you define ally. Someone who wishes to help them and be a support system for them? Yes. Someone who's well trained and can be an ally for them, like you know, with advice? No. But would I like to be? Yes.” Other interviewees described feeling empowered to be stronger advocates as they gained more knowledge, as illustrated by this comment from a sociology faculty member at a small rural college, “I think the fact that I have learned more has given me more confidence in speaking out, in support of these issues,

in more settings, in a way that I probably wouldn't have spoken out before.” Similar comments from additional voices are included in Appendix D. This is consistent with findings from previous studies attributed to social learning theory, that when faculty and staff have a sense of self-efficacy they’re much more likely to engage in advocacy for undocumented students (Canedo Sanchez & So, 2015). These studies have found that often what stops faculty and staff from advocating, is “the belief that they do not have the expertise to do so” (Cisneros & Cadenas, 2015, p.191). This may suggest that if information is disseminated to a greater number of faculty and staff, helping them to learn more about the student population, the challenges they are facing, and how to help them, the number of advocates and level of support for these students may also increase.

Does anyone on campus truly understand? When interviewees were asked to describe their perceptions of the level of knowledge their faculty and staff peers on their college campus currently possess about undocumented students, the vast majority consistently reported they suspected their peers were not knowledgeable about the issues these students face or how to help them. One academic program administrator from a small rural institution explained “A lot of times they don't really know what it takes and ... still think that they have a path to citizenship or that there is a way. And so, a lot of people just don't really know”. Similarly, an academic administrator from a large rural college summarized, “I think the knowledge level is, um, very, very, very low, very low”. This is consistent with students reporting in other research studies that the lack of knowledge among faculty and staff at their college, often leaves them struggling to figure things out on their own (Fairfield University, 2013). A student services administrator at a large urban institution described faculty’s lack of awareness, “faculty kind of highlighted that they don't know.

They don't know the processes for students to get enrolled and what they have to go through and they don't, they're not aware of that” and a student services administrator at a small rural college commented on the unintentional harm that is sometimes caused as a result of that lack of awareness, “it has not been my experience that any faculty or staff member intentionally tries to be hurtful or hateful, but that they are, they're unaware.”

Unintentional Harm, Limited Knowledge Negatively Impacts Students. An adjunct English faculty member at a small urban institution gave an example of how this lack of knowledge can impact students,

I think one of the most harmful things is, and it's not intentional of course, but the assumption that instructors have that everyone in the room has the same rights...for example, when we teach our ACA classes or our college transfer success classes, and you talk about Pell grants or whatever, federal financial aid...that's not going to be applicable to them.

A student services administrator at a small rural institution described how students are sometimes misinformed which can actually increase the barriers they face,

they're not always informed correctly. So oftentimes they'll be told, go ahead and get your GED or adult high school equivalency when in reality if they're undocumented, that won't allow them entry to North Carolina community colleges. Then they're in a catch 22 because they have earned their adult high school equivalency, which then doesn't allow them to go back and get an adult high school diploma. So, we have essentially disallowed them from moving forward with a curriculum program.

As these responses demonstrate, this misinformation can lengthen students' time to complete or in some cases completely block them from moving forward. The lack of knowledge then

that faculty and staff have about undocumented students and the challenges they must navigate, continues to perpetuate the inequities these students struggle with.

Muñoz and Vigil (2018) referred to this as ‘institutional ignorance’ when educators are “ill-informed and ill-equipped to help undocumented students successfully navigate their college campuses” (p. 7) and describes this as a form of ‘legal violence’ due to the harm caused to undocumented students who make important decisions based on this misinformation. In other research studies, students have frequently reported encountering institutional agents who were not knowledgeable nor prepared to help them (Contreras, 2009; Gildersleeve & Ranero, 2010; Muñoz, 2013; Nienhusser, 2014; Nienhusser, Vega, & Saavedra Carquin, 2016; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015). Interviewees also discussed the lack of knowledge within the community and their governing board, such as this comment from a Basic Skills director at a small rural college, “I think even the Board of Trustee representatives did not understand until we had this conversation that the tuition for undocumented students was out of state tuition”.

Lack of Awareness due to Limited Exposure. Interviewees recognized that this lack of knowledge is often due to a lack of exposure to any undocumented students directly or even any exposure to the issue indirectly. An academic program administrator at a small rural institution explained “I don't mean that they're ignorant, uneducated people, but they have a lack of knowledge of perhaps, um, because, they might not personally know some of these undocumented people and might not personally know their struggles and the value that they bring to being here in our country”. A student services administrator at a large urban institution explained “I think it's just kind of a disconnection about what their life is actually like with some of our faculty” and an academic administrator at a large rural institution also

mentions the value of exposure to gain true understanding, “And even the people who are the most versed in it, it's different living it versus learning about it.” Yet others described an unwillingness among their colleagues to acquire any additional information about the undocumented student population. A dual enrollment administrator at a small rural institution shared, “I don't know that there's the openness, the willingness, or even just the awareness of the plight of undocumented students on our campus.” Similarly a College and Career readiness coordinator at a large rural institution recalled, “They just changed the subject because they don't want to talk about it. They don't want to address it.” These descriptions of conscious choice not to bring the issue into their consciousness is symbolic of the white privilege these educators possess, they don't have to think about it, and they can make the choice not to confront what makes them uncomfortable (Doane & Bonilla-Silva, 2013).

In Hiding, Students Living in the Shadows

Why don't we ever discuss it? This theme of it being a hidden issue and the students a hidden population was present in every interview. Many interviewees said they weren't sure what the knowledge levels or attitudes among their colleagues may be because it was never discussed. A faculty member who also serves as the QEP director at a small rural institution shared “I don't know that I could adequately answer that question because to my knowledge we've never really had dialogue about it” and similarly another faculty member who teaches Sociology at a small rural institution expressed their uncertainty about colleagues' attitudes “It's never really been a topic of conversation around here so I don't know what the general attitude is”. This hidden identity of undocumented students has been a consistent finding among other research studies as well (Raza, Saravia & Katsiaficas, 2018) and Muñoz & Vigil (2018) described this as ‘pervasive invisibility’ (p. 10). This avoidance

of the presence of undocumented students, even as an issue to be discussed on campus, invalidates students' experiences and further reproduces their feeling of invisibility.

A theme that seemed to be present within many of the interviews was the assumption that there must be some area on campus where staff members were more knowledgeable and could help students, but they weren't sure. One academic department chair at a large rural institution stated,

I know there has to be someone who is well versed who knows the law and the legal things that's helping to get them registered and helping to get them, you know, as documented as we can here at the institution. But I don't know who that person is and I don't know to what extent they are advocating or supporting our students outside of the paper trails.

One adjunct English faculty member at a small rural institution provided a similar comment "I like to think it wouldn't be ignored" and a student services staff member at a small rural institution added "but I'm not sure because institutionally we don't really do a lot to promote it or talk about it.". For those that were aware of support provided, such as one student services administrator at a large urban institution, they described it as an "underground kind of network". This is also consistent with findings in other studies of the hidden nature of the support provided for undocumented students. Since sources of support are not visible, the onus is often on the student to seek out advocates and students describe the support as "operating behind the scenes and under the radar" (Muñoz & Vigil, 2018, p.11).

Undocumented students who were interviewed in another research study, described the positive impact that mentors had on their success, but noted there hadn't been any "systematic means of finding such mentors, and they had either benefited from serendipitous

encounters or sought mentors out themselves” (Gamez et al, 2015, p. 152). Without visible systems of support, undocumented students feel they must continue to hide their status and feel afraid. The navigational process becomes a hidden maze in which students have to ask the ‘right’ individuals to garner support” (Muñoz & Vigil, 2018, p.13).

No “Seat at the Table”. Yet others seemed more certain that the needs of undocumented students at their college were not being considered, perhaps even deliberately ignored. One dual enrollment administrator at a small rural institution declared “if my college didn't have to deal with them, they wouldn't for the most part. I work in rural North Carolina.” Interviewees mentioned they were unsure of how many undocumented students may even be enrolled at their institution, and that without their presence known, they did not remain within the conscious realm as students with special needs that should be met. A math faculty member at a small rural institution explained “I really feel like one of the biggest issue is, is that it's like, it's like a hidden population...I don't know who I'm advocating for so I don't know how to advocate.” Other related interviewee comments are included in Appendix D for illustration purposes. Muñoz (2016) used the term ‘legality blindness’ to define the lack of recognition that undocumented students’ status impacts their ability to successfully navigate educational pathways. By denying undocumented students a ‘seat at the table’ when reviewing policies and creating procedures ignorance of that impact is perpetuated and immigrant voices are silenced.

Interviewees discussed the importance of working toward making the issue visible on campus, in order to raise colleagues’ awareness, as first step to address the inequity. An academic department chair at a large rural institution suggested, “Well, I think it all starts with a conversation first. So we've got to put it out that are, even if it's something we haven't

talked about before, it's uncomfortable or you know, it creates controversy. I think it needs to be put out there first.”. An adjunct English faculty member at a small rural college agreed, “Visibility is a key part towards breaking down negative attitudes.” A student services staff member at a large urban institution explained,

It can be hard to connect with people who've had an experience that is just so different from your experience and when you're making um, procedures or institutional goals and things when those voices aren't the table, you know, it kind of goes without saying that they're not taken into consideration at the right level.

They also emphasized the significant value of including it in institutional dialogue beyond just a single conversation, “I think if we don't keep talking about it, then we just kind of slide it under the rug”. Without sustained dialogue the best of intentions for change may still fall short. Without the visible presence of these students, they may fall victim to being ‘out of sight, out of mind’.

A couple of interviewees did talk about rare occurrences where the topic of assisting undocumented students had been brought up in discussion, as a part of a broader movement towards increasing equity on the campus. A faculty member at a small rural institution described what often happens, “So it just gets in with everything else and it becomes part of a part of the static...mainly outside the frame of reference for most people”. Several advocates discussed the need for it to be intentionally included as a specific topic of discussion, and those interviewee comments from additional voices are included in Appendix D.

Students are truly afraid, now more than ever. Interviewees who were faculty teaching Humanities and Sociology at a small rural institution described the “heightened level of fear” they saw students struggling with, especially with the “current administration” and that because of that many students have “gone underground”. This is consistent with the findings of other recent studies that have found increased stress among the undocumented student population after the Presidential election of 2016 (Raza et. al, 2018; Muñoz & Vigil, 2018; Benuto et. al, 2018). Students who are DACAmented share their concerns about what will happen to themselves and their family if the program is terminated, especially now that they’ve shared all of their information with the government (Benuto et. al, 2018). A student who was interviewed in a recent research study conducted in Colorado described an incident when fear caused him to miss an entire class period, because he was intimidated by police presence and hid in the bathroom to avoid any potential problems (Muñoz & Vigil, 2018). Appendix D displays similar comments multiple interviewees shared about the fear they’ve witnessed students experience.

Students’ uncertainty about who they can trust and their anxiety about disclosing their undocumented status, makes them extremely cautious to take such a big risk, and so they look for the safest avenues. Quite a few interviewees described many students disclosing in essays, such as one developmental education instructor at a small rural institution who recalled, “I’ve actually had a couple of students this semester reveal this in papers, so it’s still done in silence.” This disclosure of status, is often referred to as ‘coming out’ and undocumented students are very guarded with whom they choose to share and are forced to strategically navigate relational and contextual factors as they decide whether or not to disclose (Chang, 2016; Raza et al, 2018). Politically active undocumented students ‘out’

themselves to confront stereotypes and foster solidarity (Diaz-Strong, Gomez, Luna-Duarte, & Meiners, 2014). But others choose to remain ‘in the shadows’ due to fear of deportation both for themselves and their family. Concealing their identity can often lead to feelings of isolation but the alternative, the choice to disclose their status to faculty and staff can result in discrimination and microaggressions (Gonzalez, 2016; Nienhusser, Vega, & Carquin, 2016; Valenzuela et al, 2015).

It is likely that these students disclosing through written essays as a part of the course as described by faculty in this study, is a form of “trial and error process” to determine who they can trust (Stebbleton & Aleixo, 2015, p.268). A research study conducted to explore the disclosure management process for undocumented students found that students often disclose when searching for resources, within supportive spaces, and to educate others (Raza et al, 2018). It is important for educators to understand the pressure students often face from their families, to keep their status a secret and not disclose to anyone, out of fear of deportation. When students choose to disclose their status, they also ‘out’ their families (Chen & Rhoads, 2016). This necessity to evaluate each person they encounter and discern what their potential reaction would be if they chose to disclose their identity, is a stressor for students and for many it reinforces the stigma they feel (Munoz, 2016). Unfortunately, in other studies, students have shared microaggressions they have experienced as a result of disclosure, including insensitive responses and even blatant discouragement (Nienhusser, Vega, & Carquin, 2016).

Acquiring Knowledge- The First Step to Developing Undocu-Competence

How have interviewees gained the knowledge they do possess? When interviewees were asked how they gained the knowledge they did have about undocumented students, most described a self-initiated search for knowledge, often after trying to help a student and feeling as though they had inadequate knowledge to help. A student services staff member at a large urban institution described learning from the experience of “students coming to me kind of in, in distress situations and I'm not having the knowledge and kind of having to just walk through the process with one or two students.” Similarly, a dual enrollment coordinator at a small rural institution shared “The student and I, we learned together, we brainstorm together.” Most of the interviewees who reported higher levels of knowledge described gaining the knowledge they did have through direct experience with students. As students shared their stories, they researched information to help students navigate the obstacles in their way to a successful post-secondary pathway.

DiAngelo (2018) described this self-initiated search for more knowledge as being symbolic of care, similar to if one were given a frightening diagnosis by a doctor without enough information about the disease. As she explained, you’d probably get online and learn all you could about what you could do to cure it, similar to advocates interest in searching for more information they can use to help undocumented students, as they become painfully aware of the challenges they face. A couple of interviewees mentioned that information about undocumented students was a topic of sessions they attended at conferences they’d attended, such as Achieving the Dream, but others who described low levels of knowledge mentioned only hearing the information that has been presented in the media. Respondents’ descriptions

of how they have acquired knowledge about undocumented students is displayed in Appendix D.

Understanding Financial Challenges and Other Barriers. Interviewees discussed learning more about the financial challenges students face while trying to help them as they frequently struggle with financial barriers, juggling multiple jobs to afford out-of-state tuition, with very limited options on where they can afford to transfer. A sociology faculty member at a small rural institution shared her experience,

You know, financially it's just impossible for them to do that in many cases. And it's really heartbreaking to see a student, you know, there are so many students that we see who have all kinds of advantages who really don't try. But when you have a high school student who's really working hard, they're doing great in schools as a school leader, but the avenue toward a better life through college is, you know, there's a really high barrier to them because of their immigration status.

Similarly, a College and Career readiness administrator at a large rural institution shared their frustrating experience of seeing the impact of these barriers on the students they worked with,

They spend two, three years in ESL, then they spend a year, year and a half working on high school and come every day. They do everything they're supposed to do and then go to enroll and find out it's going to be \$4,000 even to take a Con Ed class. There's no scholarship, or even if they want to get a scholarship for undocumented, they have to fill out the FASFA, which then puts them in liability. So I just don't see

that we've really, we've made these rules and these procedures, but we've never really addressed how to take care of them.

A distance education coordinator at a small rural institution also explained how institutions sometimes create additional barriers for students, “I've heard of some institutions who make undocumented students wait until the second, third day of the semester before they can even register for classes.” Respondents also discussed the roadblocks to students’ futures, often with regulations that prevent them from obtaining internships or pursuing other professional paths. Descriptions of these barriers that were shared during the interviews are included in Appendix D. Through firsthand experience these faculty and staff have gained a deep understanding of the challenges students face.

Attitudes toward the Undocumented as expressed by NC Community College

Educators

Undocu-Competence: Attitudes among Advocates. Most interviewees expressed very positive attitudes about undocumented students. An advising coordinator from a large urban college shared their view,

they're all individuals, each with their own stories and their own experiences and probably, you know, the one thing that obviously would be common to all of them would be their status, at least according to a US policy, which seems to be continually shifting. They would all have various, all the different hopes and dreams and plans for the future that we all have, but just with this extra challenge of not quite knowing how our country's government is going to treat them in the future.

Many of the other comments from additional voices are displayed in Appendix D. The themes revealed within the interview responses about personal attitudes were very similar to

those that arose from the survey responses, noting students' positive attributes and that they deserved equal access to education, as well as the comments reflecting the immigrant origin of the majority of Americans.

During each interview, participants emphasized viewing undocumented students as 'human' and were empathetic to the difficult situations immigrant families often came to the United States to escape. Interviewees also discussed their sentiment that students shouldn't be penalized for choices they didn't themselves make, that were "not their fault". A college and career readiness coordinator at a large rural institution shared their belief, "I think that a lot of undocumented students were brought here and are undocumented through no fault of their own and they think that they're unfairly penalized for circumstances that are well out of their control".

How do you justify breaking the law? In contrast the two interviewees who were not as positive in the attitudes they expressed toward undocumented students raised the question surrounding criminality, not willing to condone 'a crime'. A comment made by an interviewee from a small rural college illustrates this question, "But I, I struggled with, well, once, you know, once you start saying, well, these laws aren't really important, where do you draw the line? And who gets to decide, well, what laws are more important than the other side?" But an advocate from a large rural institution shared their internal struggle with this question that further demonstrates the complexity,

I'm an advocate of undocumented students. I believe that they should have the same rights and freedoms as other students. But at the same time, there are laws and yet I know that I personally would completely disregard the law if I was in a situation if I

was in a country that had no social safety, that was filled with violence and all those sorts of things, I would not really pay attention to immigration law either.

These comments demonstrate the struggle that these interviewees face internally, caused by the emphasis by the anti-immigrant extremists on the ‘illegality’ of an action taken by undocumented students themselves or by their parents. It seems they may not have considered that ‘laws’ created by legislators have caused this issue of criminality, and laws could also resolve the problem by reducing or even completely eliminating the criminality of students’ status such as DACA has done temporarily for at least a certain segment of the undocumented student population who have qualified. These interview comments further demonstrate that faculty and staff recognize that the students they know deserve equal rights, and yet they find it hard to separate what that means for others who commit criminal acts.

The opinions and beliefs shared by these interviewees were representative of themes that were also present in the qualitative response items on the survey, such as scarce resources and the potential danger of open borders. A Vice President of Academics at a large urban institution questioned the extent of support the college should be expected to provide to undocumented students, “my personal belief is if the state or the federal government are going to throw barriers in our way, then I'm not sure it's our responsibility to expend resources to try to find a way around them.”

It’s important to note that these interviewees were not explicitly anti-immigrant nor overly negative, but their viewpoints definitely stood out from the other interviewees who were strong passionate advocates, and yet are equally valuable findings, since they may represent attitudes and beliefs of many other community college educators. Researchers have described this argument that uses ‘legality’ as a rationale to not fully endorse support for

undocumented students, or worse that deliberately criminalizes the students, as an attempt to escape confession of or even recognition of racism, in a self-proclaimed ‘color-blind’ society (Silva, Gillman, and Tate, 2018; Douglas, Saenz, & Murga, 2015; Alcalde, 2016; Rojas-Sosa, 2016). The comments from these interviewees that demonstrate their concerns about supporting undocumented students are displayed in Appendix D.

Do educators hide personal attitudes in professional settings? A QEP director at a small rural institution expressed their mixed opinions about whether as public institutions community colleges should serve undocumented students, “or should we say no, there's a process to come into this country legally and you, you can't have access to our educational system unless you follow the process? But then what is society's role and responsibility? Um, you know, at some point humanity has to step in and, you know, we're all just people.” That same faculty member discussed a difference between their personal opinions and what they knew was appropriate professionally, “I think there's a lot of gray area. Um, so I try to be very cognizant of when it's appropriate to, you know, put on my, my personal hat and when it's appropriate to put on my educator hat.” A director of secondary partnerships at a large rural institution similarly explained,

You know, I tend to think in more in terms of how I can answer this diplomatically in a professional setting and that kind of thing. Um, I'm aware of the fact that undocumented students when they come to college are usually charged out of state rates. Um, I guess I personally don't have much of an issue with that. I don't know. But like if a parent or if I was in a presentation with students, I just might answer it a little bit more carefully I guess.

These comments indicate that at least at some level these faculty and staff recognize there may be a problem with their opinions, at least that they may negatively impact their ability to serve students well, and therefore while perhaps not willing to change their underlying assumptions, they do prioritize treating students as they deserve, regardless of their status.

Attitudes Among Colleagues Across Campus

During the interviews I was also able to probe further than was possible on the survey to investigate participant observations of the attitudes among faculty and staff on their college campus. A few interviewees did describe positive attitudes on their college campus towards undocumented students, even if sometimes departmentalized, such as an equity group described by a Basic Skills director at a small rural institution “Everybody in the group, they seem to want to do whatever we could to help undocumented students have access to college.” They described their President’s support for undocumented students as well as the others on their campus,

Our president would be extremely supportive because he seems to always be. He was on that equity group. I should have mentioned that he was a member of that and was very vocal for all students, whether they're documented or undocumented to have access to our classes. So, he would be supportive and his administrative council group would be supportive. The people that I work with, student services, I highly believe that they would be supportive.

The director of secondary partnerships at a large rural institution stated,

I think our college does an exceptional job of being very student focused and, and genuinely trying to remove barriers and make things accessible for students right

from like our very top administration on down. So, I think that, you know, people always have their own personal opinions, but I think that the climate overall on campus is one that's pretty supportive of students.

These advocates strive to continue to expand undocu-competence across their campuses as described by these comments.

Are Attitudes Influenced by Racist Nativism?

However, more than half of the interviewees discussed negative attitudes that were present on their campus such as a Dean of Students at a small rural institution who described “very conservative views and hurtful and potentially hateful toward Hispanic or undocumented” and the interviewees often attributed the negative attitudes to racism and discrimination. A faculty member at small rural institution described some of their colleagues’ attitudes “Faculty of the larger campus, I think that, that there is a racist bias”, and a dual enrollment coordinator at another small rural institution similarly recalled “teachers openly, and other students openly, saying racial slurs and things to them or treating them in a discriminatory manner or just saying nasty things even.” Unfortunately, this is consistent with research conducted across the United States, as undocumented students have described the negative encounters they have had as faculty and staff engage in deliberate or subconscious microaggressions (Benuto et al, 2018; Cervantes et al 2015; Raza et al 2018, Gamez et al, 2017) In a study conducted by Muñoz & Vigil (2018) one undocumented student interviewee described a negative incident with one of her professors in which he had no problem referring to her as a ‘what’ and not a ‘who’, and other interviewees in that same study also described encounters with faculty who had no problem referring to a human being as ‘illegal’. Other similar accounts shared by interviewees are described in Appendix D.

These negative attitudes that participants describe exist among colleagues on campus were also present in some of the survey responses, a few using the term ‘illegal’ which “dehumanizes, silences and criminalizes their existence” (Muñoz & Vigil, 2018, p.13). As these faculty and staff confront these attitudes among their colleagues, they are actively critiquing social oppression, a key component of transformational resistance (Solorzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001).

Are negative attitudes reflective of the local community? Some participants described the negative attitudes present on their campus as being reflective of the community surrounding the college, such as this comment from an academic administrator at a small rural institution,

The majority of the employees at the college grew up in this county, attended this college and then have worked for this college and with it being a socio politically conservative county I think a lot of that does carry over into some of the employees. That's their only frame of reference.

This comment describes the perceived impact that underlying assumptions and stereotypes can have on colleagues who have not had any exposure or contact to undocumented students, but have instead been surrounded by the popular anti-immigrant rhetoric present in conservative environments. Similarly, a dual enrollment coordinator at a small rural college described “seeing how people can be so nasty and the media and even in the area where I work in XXXX County, the mindsets of the people there because they are so negative.” The challenge that creates when trying to advocate at the college was clearly expressed by a Career and College promise coordinator at a small rural institution, “We're a rural county, so not as much likelihood for a progressive open-mindedness when working with this

population. So that makes it very difficult for us in this county.” This creates greater risk for community college educators engaging in advocacy for undocumented students.

Similar comments from additional voices that emerged during this interview process are displayed in Appendix D and suggest the conservative nature of the surrounding community definitely impacts attitudes of the educators on their campus. Following the election, anti-immigrant sentiment has continued to grow (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2016) and critical theorist researchers urge administrators to examine how this has influenced their college policies (Muñoz & Vigil, 2016). Community college administrators find themselves in a difficult position since the mission of their college is to serve their community and long-time residents may have very strong beliefs about what that should involve and equally strong opinions about what or who it should not.

Is this a worthy investment of my time? Approximately a third of the interviewees noted the apathy or indifference they’d observed on their campus, as displayed in Appendix D, such as an adjunct English faculty at a small urban institution who described that their colleagues expressed attitudes that were “Just sort of neutral, maybe bordering on apathetic.” When I asked interviewees to consider what their colleagues’ attitudes would be toward opportunities to learn more about undocumented students, they expressed that some of their colleagues didn’t necessarily view learning about this student population as a worthy investment of their time. A comment from a math faculty member at a small rural institution illustrates this response, “Maybe smaller numbers of undocumented students that are present and maybe some staff colleagues might feel like, if I’ve only got so much time, is this where I want to invest it?”

This seeming indifference in attitude may be indicative of a feeling of limited ability to impact change, such as the sentiment described by an academic vice president at a large urban college, “If it wasn't required, (they) would continue to choose to be blissfully ignorant because they would again feel like, you know, this is a decision that somebody above my pay grade is making. So you know, none of my business, I don't care.” During interviews with undocumented students in other research studies, students describe how this “sense of indifference” hurts them, “the problem is that they don't have an attitude towards us...I think it's worse than blatant hate for us. People fight hate everyday but... invisibility is worse (Muñoz & Vigil, 2018, p. 9).

What attitudes are hidden?

Other interviewees indicated they weren't sure about the attitudes that existed on campus because it was not a topic that was openly discussed, but they did express their hope that colleagues would have positive attitudes, such as an adjunct faculty member at a small rural institution who shared

In my heart I want to say that since it is a community college and that we are serving a population that does have immigrants in it, documented or undocumented, I hope that my fellow staff members believe in the power of education and the right to an education, no matter what your documented status.

Or, as they continued on to say, that colleagues would at least be open to considering diverse perspectives on the issue, “I think as educators they would understand that engagement with an idea is the first step. So even if they disagree, you know, listening and having an open mind, it's kind of inherent to academia”. They recognized that negative attitudes may be present but just not outwardly displayed. The Director of Secondary Partnerships at a large

urban institution explained “Most of our folks are smart enough to be very careful, you know, to be onboard with what the college is trying to do” and similarly the director of basic skills at a small rural institution recalled, “So if there was anybody in the room, they kept it to themselves.” They expressed their hope that students would not be treated any differently by their colleagues, regardless of their attitudes toward student status, such as the sentiment shared by the Vice President of Academics at a large urban institution, “the bottom line, if a student shows up in your class, I hope you would serve that student as any student and you know, basically you don't need to know whether they're an inmate or an ex offender or, and in this case, an undocumented individual. You serve the needs of your students. Within the context of your class.” This sentiment certainly expresses the expectation that students will not be actively discriminated against by faculty and staff regardless of what their beliefs may be toward undocumented immigrants. However it fails to recognize the negative impact that these underlying assumptions faculty and staff possess toward undocumented students has on the undocumented students at their institution, regardless of whether they are deliberately revealed or intentionally hidden.

Contact with Undocumented Students Motivates Development of Undocu-Competence

When participants were asked to describe the contact they've had with undocumented students and how it has impacted them, several discussed the first time they had been exposed to the issue, such as the comment by an adjunct faculty member at a small rural institution who recalled “...when they became not abstract but instead very, very real people.” Some participants described never really being aware or even considering it, and one math faculty member at a small rural institution attributed that lack of awareness to being blinded by privilege, “I grew up in a place where there was hardly any, um, diversity. And so

I didn't think of immigrants, legal or otherwise, a nice privileged middle class upbringing and very sheltered and unaware.” They explained “just like anyone with privilege to say, it's not something I've ever taken a lot of time to, to research on my own. Like I could ask or seek out information, but with all of the other things that are going on in life, I (have been) privileged not to worry about it.”

When these interviewees who had not previously been aware, had direct personal contact with undocumented students, they describe how the issue becomes humanized, such as an instructional designer at a small rural institution who explained “So when you get to know somebody and you know their story, that person becomes a real person to you, it's not just an outsider, not an ‘other’. And so, I think knowing the students is a big part of that.”

One math faculty member at a small rural institution recalled how “through personal experience with undocumented students, I realized that, you know, you're just trying to figure it out just like all the rest of us and you know, they should have the supports that everyone else has and they haven't had that so far but for most of them through absolutely no fault of their own”. A student services administrator at a small rural institution expressed their realization of the need for “being honest with ourselves sometimes and going, ‘huh’, I could have gotten this wrong and I'm, I am willing to say I got this wrong.” One faculty member at a small urban institution explained how they were impacted when students with whom they'd already established rapport with trusted them enough to disclose their status, “hearing firsthand because you know, you can read what it's like but hearing firsthand from a student who I already had a trust relationship with, it just makes it so much more real and so much more like, wow, this is something terrible that is impacting you in such a negative way that's not your fault.” These responses describe how contact with undocumented students helps the

issue become very, very, real for them, one they are personally aware of, with a much better understanding.

Does contact change educator opinions about undocumented students? When I asked participants to consider whether their opinions and beliefs about undocumented students had changed based on the personal contact they had with them, one faculty member at a large urban institution shared “I think the number one driver because we can always make a judgment about something that we don't know, but until you interact with a human being, you can maybe have a biased opinion on what you think the laws should be.” The Career and College promise coordinator at a small rural institution similarly expressed,

One of the things that has been powerful for me and for most people is that it's very easy to understand or have a stigma towards a group of people, but once you hear their story and you realize that they have struggled and they're human and they have the same goals as everyone else, um, that has the power to change someone's view.

A College and Career Readiness Dean at a small rural college described the impact of the exposure to undocumented students that has served as a catalyst for conversations on campus about how the college can strive to meet their needs,

I think that just having our ESL students here visible to everybody on campus has created some kind of an awareness amongst faculty because our classes are right here now. So they have to be aware and then having this equity focus group, I think it's something that's just now starting to happen.

Others stated that while their beliefs hadn't changed, the personal contact they had with undocumented students had definitely strengthened their beliefs. One adjunct faculty

member at a small rural institution explained that their experiences with students “solidified my opinions. It's almost more from when you go from, Yeah, I believe in this too, to, I got more fiery about it. That's a good word. I got angry about it”. A student services staff member at a small rural institution similarly shared “I think they've changed over time as one of those things where you really don't pay attention to it or you don't care much about it hits close to home.” These responses suggest that the contact that these faculty and staff have with undocumented students disrupts the stereotypes they have held based on an abstract conception of an undocumented immigrant. Suddenly as they have firsthand experiences with these ‘real’ undocumented students and see the challenges they face, they are empowered by the truth, often experience anger at the injustice, and begin to engage in advocacy for the undocumented student population.

What does contact teach educators about students’ struggles? Interviewees described learning more about the barriers students faced, through the personal contact they had with students, such as an English faculty member at a large urban institution who shared “it wasn't until I actually talked to students that I realized they were being charged out of state tuition.” Nienhusser and Espino (2016) also found these experiences to be valuable to the faculty and staff they interviewed in their study and described them as “informal learning opportunities” (p. 8). One student services staff member at a large urban institution described their experience, “I'm much more, more sensitive to some of the policies and things I feel like I, whereas before I actually was in this position, I would have, maybe I would not have considered the needs of these students so much”. They also described how their personal contact with undocumented students has led to “emotions that create some attachment to it.” A distance education coordinator at a small rural institution shared

I empathize with them, you know, these are people that I've worked with. They were my students. I became friends with a lot of them when I was working in ESL and they're good people. The folks that I've worked with, I don't look at them as being, let me see how to put this, I don't view them negatively because they are in violation of particular laws. Most of the people that I know are people that are good, decent, hardworking people. They're the kind of people that I want in my community and I don't like seeing them being discriminated against.

An academic department chair at a large rural institution shared similar impact “I'm here with our students, and, you know, getting to know them on a more personal basis, seeing their struggles, learning about how resilient they are and everything they go through. It has definitely made me feel, you know, more indebted to them. It makes me feel, like, I definitely owe them more.” One math faculty member at a small rural institution described the impact of the emotional connection, “I feel like when you get to know people though, through personal experience, that's how you change your heart. You can read stuff and kind of change your mind, but when you have a personal experience with someone or many someones, that's when you're like, wow, these are just people you know, you feel differently instead of just think differently.” The emotions generated through this contact with undocumented students and often the supportive relationships that continue to develop as a result, are one motivating element that drives advocacy efforts, as described by these faculty and staff interviewed.

Dreambuilders Provide Validation to Undocumented Students

In the midst of the fear and anxiety that many undocumented students face, the majority of interview participants were able to describe ways in which they or colleagues provide these

students with validation and support. Interviewees described methods of creating a safe space where students could feel comfortable disclosing their undocumented status and discussing the challenges they were facing.

I get there early and we'll just be talking about life issues that they might be going through just even, you know, how his work, you know, how are you doing with your other classes and then the stress kind of, you know, because they're experiencing distress of being uncertain about their future, that it just kind of naturally leads into that.

Since students often experience stress as described by interview respondents in this study and students as participants in other research studies regarding when they should take the risk to disclose, it is important for advocates to find ways to communicate their support to alleviate this stress.

What may help students feel safe to disclose their status? Some participants have signs and stickers on their doors that identify themselves as an 'Undocu-ally' and as one department chair at a large rural institution described they hope it conveys to students, that "we support you, you know, just to try and create that very welcoming, sort of reassuring type atmosphere. Um, so that hopefully we do whatever we can to make sure it's a safe space for everybody." An adjunct faculty member at a small urban institution also stated they "hope that students who are just passing through and see that would know that if they really did need someone to turn to, they could." Other interviewees described methods they use to create a safe space in their classroom, such as sociology faculty member at a small institution who shared "I self-disclose a lot of information to my students in the beginning, you know, so that they know kind of who I am, and are more willing to share who they are to me just to

create common ground and establish that kind of rapport.” and described their perspective, “my mantra in teaching is don't be another obstacle. And I think that they can trust that I'm not going to do that. I'm not gonna report them or call anybody or anything like that...and so I think I somehow have cultivated, the presence that feels like, without judgment.” One math faculty member at a small rural institution explained “If I say something in the classroom where they feel like I'm not going to be a threat to them, sometimes they'll self-disclose after that”. These strategies ease the constant burden and fear students feel as they struggle with knowing who they can trust (Raza et al, 2018). When educators are willing to come alongside students in this vulnerable state, they reduce the stress students feel when they are unsure whether they will endanger themselves through disclosure of status.

A department chair at a large rural institution described their effort to show them “a friendly face they can come to, if they're struggling or need to talk” and a student services staff member at a large urban institution explained they aim “to let them know that I am paying attention and that I've heard what they've said.” Interview participants also shared the impact they observed when they provided this validation for students. An ESL coordinator at a small rural institution explained her experience, “I think honestly just listening to them and to their stories and showing them that I care I think really goes a long way.” An adjunct faculty member at a small urban institution described their beliefs about why it may be so meaningful to students,

It feels like they really just want to have somebody to talk about, the things they go through. The DACA students they'll almost universally they'll tell you about the immigration office, they'll talk to you about concerns about paying for college after community college, stuff like that. It almost feels like an unburdening really. And I

don't know if that's because a lot of people don't understand the intricacies of the, you know, the legal, legal tiptoeing.

Students often feel they must spend so much time in hiding and are unable to discuss the challenges they face with anyone, due to the fear of the risk involved in disclosing their status. When they are able to connect with a supportive faculty or staff member they realize is an advocate, they are grateful to have someone to discuss the stressful challenges they deal with on a daily basis.

How can educators help students feel valued and accepted for who they are?

Other types of validation and support participants provide students are displayed in Appendix D and include encouraging them to recognize their cultural wealth and the other strengths they possess, helping them navigate the barriers they face and find the smoothest pathways to access postsecondary education and identifying any financial assistance that may be available. One faculty member at a large rural college described how they first recognized the importance of valuing the students' culture within the classroom, by assuming the worst and misjudging a students' actions but then by discovering their mistake and learning to not fear the unfamiliar. A student services staff member at a large urban institution described their efforts to involve the whole family in the education process, "I encourage the parents to come as well. That way I can answer any questions for the parents, whether it's in English or Spanish. So that really, hopefully speaks volumes to the students." Similarly, an academic administrator at a small rural institution shared their effort to provide information about extended opportunities for the whole family to participate, "So I tell my students about this class and tell them to have their parents come and participate and learn for free." In alignment with validation theory as discussed in the literature review section, these faculty

and staff provide validation of students' cultural identity, empowering the students to recognize their self-worth and believe in their ability to succeed.

How can educators help students navigate through the challenges they face? This validation and the assistance educators provide to these undocumented students helps them feel more included and connected to the college and they are more likely to trust these faculty and staff and take advantage of campus resources. As one student services administrator at a small rural institution explained they feel “responsible for helping to get students over hurdles” and a math faculty member from a small rural institution stated the message they attempt to convey to undocumented students “We're here to help. We're here to remove barriers. We want to increase access points and um, just help you reach the goals that you have.” One adjunct faculty member at a large rural institution explained they start with the question, “Okay. How do we, how do we get this young person through school and kind of asking some of those pointed questions to navigate opportunities.” Similarly, an adjunct English faculty member at a small urban institution relayed “that's probably what I spend most of my time doing when I worked with these students is just trying to figure out how can we get from point a to point b and see what's actually feasible and helping the student to see the possibility”. The ESL coordinator at a small rural institution explained the delight they experience when they are able to, “...provide information about opportunities and resources that are available to them to help access programs that they can qualify for.” For instance, the dual enrollment coordinator at a small rural institution recalled how students will “be interested in the dual enrollment program, but they think that they can't participate because of their citizenship status and I love, informing them that that's not the case, that they can access those programs.” It is this care and compassion that these educators demonstrate in their

interactions with undocumented students that helps to strengthen students' resilience, and sense of belonging at the college. "When undocumented students see that student affairs professionals know about and demonstrate an ethic of care, it increases the likelihood of developing trust, which can result in higher use of student support services." (Valenzuela et al, 2015, p.90) Students are more likely to trust using campus resources, because their concern for their vulnerability and their risk of status being revealed, is at least somewhat reduced.

What campus resources are available to assist undocumented students?

Interview participants recognized the limited resources available to undocumented students on their campus, as one student services staff member at a small rural institution declared "there aren't really a lot of resources." Several participants mentioned referring students to a specific person on campus or helping them to establish a network of support, such as a student service administrator at a large urban institution who stated they encourage all faculty and staff to "find an advocate for them in student services". Similarly, the Director of Secondary Partnerships at a large rural institution explained that for them it's about, "trying to support them sometimes in looking at building the network of people who could be there for them." This is consistent with the findings from past studies when students have described their struggles locating a source of support on campus (Vasilogambros, 2016; Stebleton & Aleixo, 2015; Raza et al, 2018, Gamez et al, 2015). Other similar comments from the faculty and staff interviewed are displayed in Appendix D. Chen and Rhoads (2016) found that anxiety experienced by the faculty and staff in their study as a result of the "immigrant-hostile sociopolitical contexts" they encountered, forced them to provide support "in the shadows" (p.527).

Interview participants did also mention the expectation that was communicated to all faculty and staff members on campus that all students be served well regardless of personal attitudes or opinions about the undocumented students' status. As one adjunct English faculty member at a large urban institution stated, their administration "makes it very clear that any sort of a negative, what do you call it, a back lash on any students that do disclose their undocumented status will not be tolerated". Similarly, an English faculty member at a large rural institution stated their administration clearly conveyed the message "Whether or not you believe that undocumented students should be in our college, fine, that's your personal belief, but we do have undocumented students and we will serve them and serve them as well as we would serve any other students." They explained that from an administration standpoint, it was not about changing personal beliefs of faculty and staff but rather as an academic administrator at a small rural institution explained, "It's setting the expectation that I'm not trying to change what you believe. If what you believe is not helping our students, all of our students, then it does not meet the expectation of the college." This practice of administrators clearly communicating expectations for all faculty and staff to understand will be discussed further in Chapter 6.

How can undocumented students take advantage of other campus resources?

They also discussed encouraging students to utilize the resources that were available to all students on their campus even if there were not resources that focused specifically on meeting the unique needs of the undocumented student population. An adjunct English faculty member from a large rural institution shared experience assisting students,

I would help her out and support her in any way that I was able to. I pointed her to single stop so that she could look at some of the resources there and I told her about

the food pantry. She didn't know about it and encouraged her to look into those resources.

As documented in previous research studies (Nienhusser & Espino, 2016; Chen & Rhoads, 2016; Suarez-Orozco et al, 2015; Stebleton & Aleixo, 2015; Gamez et al, 2017; Raza et al, 2018) participants recognize that in addition to their unique needs undocumented students also share many of the same challenges as do other low-income first generation students, and therefore can benefit from some of the same resources designed to address those common challenges. An academic program administrator from a small rural college emphasized

If you need help with transportation, then we will help you with transportation. It doesn't matter whether you were born in North Carolina or Timbuktu, it just, it shouldn't matter because I think where the real controversy lies is admittance and payment. I think those are the controversial issues. When it comes to treatment of individuals, it should unequivocally be the same because people are people.

Unfortunately, some resources are unavailable to undocumented students due to policy restrictions and students may be reluctant to seek services because they are concerned about their vulnerability. It is important for advocates to be aware of this concern, and also to be knowledgeable about which resources these students can access. Campus administrators can increase the likelihood that students will take advantage of resources if they are explicit that they are available to all students regardless of status. Other comments from additional voices related to helping undocumented students find and use campus resources are displayed in Appendix D.

DreamBuilders Engage in Advocacy

Raising Awareness and Generating Additional Resources. There were only two interviewees who did not identify themselves as strong allies for undocumented students. When participants were asked to describe how they personally engaged in advocacy for undocumented students, they discussed political advocacy, attempts to raise awareness among colleagues and students on their campus, and engagement within the community. The coordinator of an ESL program at a small rural institution shared, “I have definitely signed onto petitions online and tried to be active, learning about policy, and have called some of our representatives to advocate for them and to encourage them to pass the dream bill or pass DACA.” One faculty member at a small rural institution recalled a specific situation with a past student,

we had a student, several years ago. I got very involved with his family writing recommendations for him. I was on the list to go to court for him and testified for him, as he tried to protect himself and his family through the process of a potentially being deported out of the United States.

Other interviewees described their involvement in the community, such as faculty member at a large urban institution who shared “I do a lot of advocacy stuff on my own in the community for undocumented persons”, and the Dean of Students at a small rural institution who explained they continued to “reach out to our community partners and establish more community partners and our local school systems to create those relationships early “. The Career and College promise coordinator at a large rural institution shared “So I try to work with our local English as a second language teachers...to try to get the word out that while

they may be facing out of state tuition after high school, there are some ways students can reduce costs.”

Interviewees also described locating alternate forms of financial resources, or sometimes promoting the creation of new funding sources through their advocacy in the community, promoting awareness and requesting streams of financial assistance for undocumented students. They explained how they assist students with the “employer sponsorship” process, or as an academic program administrator at a small rural institution defined it, “the deferred action business sponsorship option for students. I am kind of the point person for that, so a lot of students come to meet with me to find out what their options are. There is not a bilingual person over in the enrollment side of the house, so I kind of serve as that liaison.” A student services administrator at a large rural institution also described “reaching out to some of our local community partners to enroll more students here increasingly over time who are either undocumented or have different action status” and as another academic administrator at a small urban shared those community conversations often “focused on how we could set up some scholarship funds specifically to help that population.” Yet it can be quite challenging for advocates, as explained by an academic administrator at a small rural institution because the community is not always supportive.

One advocate who serves as a Dual Enrollment program administrator at a small rural institution explained in detail how they advocated for funding for undocumented students at their institution:

At my current institution and my previous institution, I tried to go through the proper channels on the enrollment side to try to find financial scholarships, just some type of way for undocumented students to be able to afford higher education and in

going through the proper channels, but I kept getting bounced around. Um, so I took it upon myself to meet with that college presidents. So, I bravely went to meet with them to plead my case and to advocate for them. And fortunately, at both institutions, they have agreed to at least offer undocumented students merit-based scholarships that come from institutional funds to kind of help offset the cost.

This direct advocacy faculty and staff engage in as they seek financial resources for undocumented students makes it possible for the students to continue their education when they may otherwise have to drop out because they don't have the funding to continue to pay out of state tuition.

How do you step out of the shadows to take a stand?

Interviewees described their advocacy efforts of educating students in their classes about the topic of undocumented students, broadening students' horizons by presenting their own perspectives and opinions but also guiding them in critical reflection, especially those who have less than favorable attitudes toward the undocumented student population. One humanities faculty member shared "that's something that I ask them to journey with me through the class to discover, you know, why do you think this way?" A faculty member at a large rural institution described the ways they indirectly may share their beliefs "in an English class we tend to talk about controversial topics and I've probably implicitly, you know, communicated my support. I try not to tell people what to believe or what to do, but it probably comes through to some extent." Another faculty member at a small rural institution was more explicit in sharing their beliefs with students "So I am very open about my support and I make a list of it, you know, this is why I'm a socialist. These are the things I believe, and one of the things on the list is that I believe all of the undocumented should be given a pathway to citizenship and that pathway to citizenship should not be a jumping through a lot

of hoops to get there.” Similar to the findings in other recent research, the advocacy described by the faculty and staff in this study, is “pragmatic and contextual” (Crawford & Arnold, 2016, p. 205). These faculty and staff demonstrate their undocu-competence daily within their immediate environment at the institution in practical ways that raise awareness and increase support for undocumented students.

Some participants described ways in which their institution did visibly show support for undocumented students, such as the Career and College Promise Coordinator at a small rural institution who shared “last year our graduation speaker was a student who enrolled here at this institution as an undocumented student while she was working on her citizenship paperwork, paid out of state tuition.” Others shared how they themselves take initiative to plant seeds and create public visual displays of their support that cause their colleagues to consider the issue, such as a student services administrator at a small rural institution who explained “I have a bulletin board up right now, right? And it has some for this college, kind of some shocking statements and perspectives.” The Dean of Students at a small rural institution took a softer approach to raising the issue with colleagues, “There may be some very strong resistance, kind of in your face, so planting seeds along the way I think are also very helpful” whereas others were much more direct in raising the issue with colleagues and engaging them in dialogue, “I try to speak up in meetings when I can to say, are we considering this?” especially with those colleagues that have outwardly expressed negative attitudes, “we’ve had dialogue about why they would say something like that”. They explain their attempts as “finding out the core of what they have a problem with and then coming up with strategies to try and, you know, meet in the middle on a particular idea”.

Participants realize as shared by a sociology faculty member at a small rural institution “You're never going to get everybody on board and you're never going to have everybody pay attention. But it's sort of like I relate everything child rearing it sort of like, you know, rearing kids, like just because they, you know, your children don't get art doesn't mean you don't take them to art galleries.” They know “you can't force a belief on another person. We can engage somebody, we can encourage them, we can expose them, but like you can't say you have to love somebody, you have to!” Instead as one adjunct English faculty member at a small rural institution shared, the only way negative attitudes “can be overcome is with persistence, a patient, sort of an educated dialogue and a dedication to identify the specific disagreement”. As these faculty and staff bring the topic of institutional support for undocumented students into institutional dialogue they help to increase students' visibility on campus and their advocacy counteracts the avoidance tendency that otherwise conveys to students that they must remain in the shadows.

What are the risks of advocacy? But interviewees also described the important need to be cautious, such as the dual enrollment coordinator at a small rural institution who said “my advocacy goes a little beyond my title and my official responsibilities here. I have to try to package it under something that's related to my responsibilities because I have burned bridges in the past when I go beyond that”. One faculty member at a small rural institution even shared concern with losing their job due to their advocacy, “I'm continuously worried now about my job.” This decision that educators make to proceed with their advocacy despite the risks demonstrates the level of their commitment to social justice, a key element of transformational resistance. Other recent research has also found this delicate balance that educators who engage in advocacy must negotiate, abiding by federal and state laws, as well

as institutional policies, but finding ways to help students have a meaningful educational experience (Chen & Rhoads, 2016).

Similarly, a College and Career Readiness coordinator at a large rural institution also shared “This is not a topic I would probably go to the local newspaper with while I’m still employed at the college and advocate that publicly but get me in a room with anybody besides my president normally. And I will talk your ear off.” The Coordinator of Advising at a large urban institution expressed their understanding that the institution also has to be cautious in engaging or showing support for any advocacy for undocumented students “we need to be politically neutral as an institution, not necessarily supporting one government policy over the other, getting drawn into a debate that could be seen as essentially, we can’t be seen to take sides politically. We have to remain neutral that way. So, I would think that is probably a primary concern when it comes to offering something on a bigger level, if that makes sense.” Indeed, this is aligned with results from other recent studies as well, that have found instances in which administrators who have engaged in advocacy for undocumented students have faced retaliation from colleagues or the public (Chen & Rhoads, 2016). Again, these comments seem to reflect the understanding that undercover advocacy minimizes risks to both students and advocates while still confronting myths by raising awareness of the actual facts that contradict stereotypes and other falsehoods which are so commonly spread among anti-immigrant activists.

Influential Factors in the Development of Undocu-Competence

During the interview, I asked participants to reflect on particular influencers that led to their advocacy and contributed to their development of undocu-competence, and interviewee comments are displayed in Appendix D. Some participants attributed their

advocacy to a key part of their identity, such as the Director of Secondary Partnerships at a large rural institution who explained “I think my natural instinct is to try to support students no matter where they are and regardless of any challenges that they face.” An institutional researcher at a large urban institution similarly described themselves as “kind of an ally or for anybody who's the underdog in a way.” The Dean of Students at a small rural institution mentioned their religious beliefs as a key influencer, “I guess it's just my belief system that my creator made us all in his perfection and we should all be treated well and treated fairly.” A student retention manager at a large urban institution commonly expressed influencer was the understanding that participants who were members of a minoritized population shared with undocumented students, as they themselves “experienced discrimination as a student of color in educational institutions.” This “othering” process has been explored by other researchers who have studied marginalized populations and defined as “a process that identifies those who are thought to be different from oneself or the mainstream, and it can reinforce and reproduce positions of domination and subordination” (Johnson, Bottorff, Browne, Grewal, Hilton, & Clarke, 2004, p.255). Similarly, an academic program administrator at a small rural college explained, “I know how it feels to be mistreated because of your ethnicity because of the color of your skin because of people's misconceptions about you basically on what they've heard are based on maybe even what they witnessed are based on what they've seen on TV.”

Interviewees also described their advocacy for undocumented students as being originally influenced in childhood, such as the comment made by the career and college promise coordinator at a small rural institution who attributed “I was very fortunate to have been taught the important lesson at a young age, to view all human beings as human first.”

They explained, “I didn't understand quite the difference of documented versus undocumented until the senior year of high school came around and I was able to go to college, but my friends weren't. And then that's when it started kind of dawning on me that hey, not everyone has access to go to college, and I knew of friends who had to move to another state, to get in state tuition. So that's again on the personal level.” Similarly, other interviewees also described the personal contact they had with undocumented students as influencing their advocacy, especially as they learned more about the barriers that stand in their way. They also describe their care and compassion for students as influencers for advocacy, such as the Dean of Students at a small rural institution who explained that for them it was “just caring enough to try to help remove barriers.”

How Do Emotions Impact Undocu-Competence? The emotions described by interviewees as they discussed their influencers were very strong. Many described the anger they felt about the injustice of it all, with comments like those from a Humanities faculty member at a small rural institution, “it sickens me and it frustrates me and makes me very, very angry. What's happening to them is so unfair”, and from the coordinator of advising at a large urban institution who explained “I got angry about it when I, you know, when you learned more”. An adjunct English faculty member at a small rural institution shared “seeing how afraid they are and how that fear impacts their lives, and again, the inequity of the unfairness of it, it just makes me angry!” The fear that interviewees describe seeing in students’ eyes is a common finding in the majority of the existing research including undocumented students and often cited as a motivator for advocacy (Crawford, 2015; Muñoz & Vigil, 2018; Benuto et al, 2018; Raza et al, 2018; Suarez-Orozco, 2015).

An ESL program coordinator at a small rural institution also described the injustice that these students don't receive the same benefits and opportunities,

Well, you know, I want them to have justice and opportunities just like we all do. I mean, I know I've been very blessed with every opportunity and um, blessing in my life and so, and I didn't do anything to deserve it so I just feel like everybody should have that opportunity because I know that the ones I know are very, very hard working and honest people and they should, they deserve to have these opportunities.

This concept has been described in the research on white privilege, “the antidote to guilt is action” (DiAngelo, 2018, p.143). This refers to one of the ways that those who are privileged can respond in a healthy way when they recognize their privilege is based merely on the color of their skin, or in this case, based on which side of the border they happened to be born on. They can use their privilege to advocate for disadvantaged populations, to engage in transformational resistance to resolve the inequity, in this case to advocate for the rights undocumented students deserve. Interviewees described how their anger and frustration served as an influencer, and motivated their advocacy, such as a Humanities faculty member at a small rural institution who explained “there has to be some outlet for my anger. And so, when I engage in advocacy I feel a little better, at least I was taking some kind of action”. One adjunct English faculty member at a small rural institution even more strongly expressed their opinion, “having a nation of immigrants turn to a new population of immigrants and say, ‘us but not you’ played the rankest hypocrisy and I believe like a violation of the American dream itself.” This paradox of immigration in the United States, celebrated for being a nation of immigrants yet dehumanizing and criminalizing immigrants of color, has been discussed by LatCrit researchers, since it certainly seems indicative of White

Supremacy (Douglas, Saenz, & Murga, 2015). This faculty member expressed frustration with colleagues whose beliefs are similar to some of the comments included in a few of the survey responses in this study, in alignment with white supremacist rhetoric that emphasizes undocumented students receiving unmerited advantages, that they are somehow unworthy to deserve, utilizing scarce resources that should be reserved for citizens (the privileged majority) and having no respect for the law. This will be discussed more in Chapter 6.

Some participants shared the empathy they feel for undocumented students with comments like the student services administrator at a large urban institution who emotionally stated, “my heart goes out to anyone who's in a situation like that” and emphasized “I can only imagine what it would be like to be living with that level of uncertainty.” The Coordinator of an ESL program at a small rural institution also described how it impacted them emotionally, “it hurts me to see them treated badly and discriminated against” and the Dean of Students at a small rural institution shared, “there are tears shed on both sides of that desk, and it's, it is really heart-wrenching”. A student services administrator at a small urban institution shared, “I think the best argument is just sheer human compassion, if that makes sense. So, I would say that I'm an ally for them in the same way that I would be an ally for any other group that's in a disadvantaged situation for the same reason that, you know, it's important to be human in the way that we interact with each other.” These comments reflect the compassion and empathy felt by faculty and staff who engage in advocacy for undocumented students.

The coordinator of advising at a large urban institution shared how “depressing” it can be because

I'm not sure really how much we can do for folks. We can't fundamentally change the fact that they are living in fear of I.C.E. knocking on their door pretty much every day. So, I really wish I could do something about that and I don't know what I can do. I don't think a sign on the door is going to change the fact that you know, that I.C.E. could be knocking when you get home, you know, I don't think anything's going to change that.

The Director of Basic Skills at a small rural institution recalled one specific experience that dramatically impacted them,

This breaks my heart to this day, there's still heartbreak. One of the checkpoints went up one day and none of us were aware of it. None of us caught it and some of our students were leaving the class and we actually had several of our undocumented students arrested for driving without a license because they were trying to get an education. And to this day, it still breaks my heart that happened! This theme of empathy and caring has been present in the other research studies with advocates as well (Nienhusser & Espino, 2016; Valenzuela et al, 2015; Crawford & Arnold, 2016)

These emotions reflected in the stories and experiences faculty shared during interviews are strong and often motivated the development of undocu-competence but also motivates the desire among these advocates to increase undocu-competence across their campuses.

Participant Suggestions for Increasing Undocu-Competence. During interviews I posed the following question: ‘Since you have stated the knowledge levels on your campus are low and that you yourself would like to learn more, what do you think may increase the knowledge levels and perhaps positive attitudes?’ I was very interested in hearing their insights and strategies for building the undocu-competence at their campus, strategies which

can perhaps be applied across the North Carolina Community College system. Participants recognize that their colleagues generally are not exposed to the true struggles of undocumented students, or even consider the issue since it is typically hidden and not discussed on campus.

Every participant but one that was interviewed described their ideas for including methods of sharing real student stories about the challenges they face at their particular institution in some type of professional development. One faculty member at a small rural institution commented “I don't think it probably occurs to the average person here of how strange it must feel to walk into this world where everybody more or less looks the same and you're the one who is different”. Another faculty member at a large rural institution stated their belief that the college has some responsibility to better prepare their faculty and staff to serve all students well and help meet the unique needs of this student population or at least to be aware of them,

this is an issue that we need to address, and we need to at least have some exposure.

We need to have the conversations so that when it becomes a bigger and bigger and bigger issue, then our entire faculty is not left in the dark about it and that as a consequence you just have like one or two people doing the work which isn't fair.

These responses indicate that creating opportunities for faculty and staff to have increased exposure to undocumented students such as the examples described by these interviewees, could motivate and increase undocu-competence.

Existing Professional Development at some NC Community Colleges. Although most interviewees were consistent with the survey responses, indicating there had not been

any professional development about undocumented students offered on their campus, three of the interviewees did discuss at least some effort on their campus to build undocu-competence among faculty and staff by exposing them to professional development activities. This included as one participant described, “a campus all-read over the summer about an undocumented student’s journey”, and often as a component of larger equity initiatives, but one of them did also share that the session had not been well attended. Other descriptions of current efforts are included in Appendix D.

What should be included in the professional development to be offered? When I asked the interviewees to describe what they thought should be included in the professional development sessions they cautioned, “I would say just enough information because too much is just mind boggling and they're balancing enough in their everyday life. So just giving them enough information that they understand that there are opportunities here I'm here are, you know, five or six guiding points.” A developmental math instructor at a large rural institution shared, “I think giving everyone the tools so that when they recognize the signs, they would feel more comfortable beginning to address it.” Another similarly stated they felt information should be provided that would help “faculty and staff that work with them to, you know, have the tools to be able to help those students succeed.” They also all talked about the value of sharing real student stories, preferably by a student speaker, although some cautioned the potential risk to students, as an essential component to humanize the issue and make it real for faculty and staff instead of it being an abstract issue. A student services administrator at a small rural institution explained the benefit of including students in the professional development, “It makes it one of our students and brings not just the face but a face and a name and in a story and the understanding that we are far more

similar than we are dissimilar.” Other important components noted by interviewees are included in Appendix D.

Humanizing. A faculty member at a large rural institution shared that their belief that the professional development session should include an undocumented student, was based on their own personal experience of attending sessions with a student speaker, “in the past I have attended two workshops where they did bring in undocumented people to share their journey and their story and that is the most powerful thing.” An adjunct faculty member at a small rural institution stated

I think it would be really hard for someone who's a teacher and sees these students in the classroom to not, feel some sense of responsibility or. I mean I don't understand how you could spend so many hours with the student in and allow their immigration status to change how you feel.

Participants discussed putting a face to the issue that removed the distance from the ‘otherness’ of the undocumented student, enabling educators to recognize that these students have the same dreams and goals as every other student they serve.

But really, I think the best way is to have a personal experience with the students who open up to you or who you are aware is undocumented and you can see that this is a student with as many or more struggles as other students who is doing their best and who deserves support just like anybody else. They might need different supports because of their situation, but you know, you feel that personal connection. You feel like, well, I really do want to do more about this, but until you know how to handle that situation, you might never find yourself learning about someone suffering this

because you never saw the signs. You never knew how to ask. You never knew how to present the opportunity to students that you are an ally. It's in training us on how to open ourselves up and recognize signs so that we could open up ourselves to students better, that would be the first step. Then there would be a greater likelihood of having the experience with the students. And that's what I think will change people's minds.

These comments demonstrate that the personal interaction with undocumented students helped faculty and staff recognize the human identity of the undocumented students and that they deserve the same rights.

Caution: Concern for Putting Students at Risk. Yet as valuable as the majority of participants described it would be to have student speakers, several expressed their concern for putting students at risk, “it seems almost irresponsible to ask them to kind of identify themselves” and another showed similar unease, “I don't want to do anything that's going to put individual students in legal jeopardy.” During the time students were eligible for and protected by DACA, those risks were at least slightly mitigated, but unfortunately as is clear from the survey results in this study, there are still a small number of faculty and staff that are strongly opposed to undocumented students’ presence on the community college campus and in this country. While the benefits of professional development including stories shared by currently enrolled students are clear, it is crucial that the educators planning these sessions, understand and accept responsibility for making arrangements to minimize risk.

Format of Professional Development to be Offered. As one participant stated, “It would probably be beneficial to have some kind of a session where college employees could engage in dialogue, have a presentation, and then have an opportunity to have some conversations.” Another shared their idea for a session that would lead to applied change,

It should include a framework for getting people to recognize ways that they're not noticing undocumented students and not inviting them into the conversation in certain ways. It's sort of a way for people to analyze their own classroom behavior in and pick a specific change to try to make.

Other interviewees expressed similar comments as displayed in Appendix D. This recognition and focus helps to create sustainable change by inviting undocumented students to be visible participants in the institutional reform encompassing the study's key findings.

Summary of Key Findings from Interviews

Similar to the finding that emerged from the survey responses, the interviewees consistently described low levels of knowledge among their colleagues and even themselves and explained this was largely due to a lack of awareness and limited exposure to conscious experiences with undocumented students. Another finding consistent across interviews, was the 'hidden' nature of the students, their presence on campus, their needs, and what strategies could be put in place to help them. The faculty and staff interviewed in this study explained that it was not something that was ever or rarely discussed on campus and in some cases was deliberately avoided. In other cases, the lack of discussion seemed to stem from the lack of representation of undocumented students or their advocates within the groups making campus decisions. Another significant finding that was clearly present across interviews, was the genuine extreme level of fear these faculty and staff witnessed students suffering and since it is so hidden on campus, they often lacked visible support and had to take the risk of disclosing to try to find institutional agents they could ask for help, without knowing whether they would be in danger or supported.

Since support for undocumented students is something that is not discussed on campus, the faculty and staff interviewed, explained they were often unaware of colleagues' attitudes. Some described colleagues who questioned whether it was worth their time to learn about this specific student population since they didn't believe many were enrolled at their institution. Others described negative attitudes that reflected racist nativist sentiment and a few respondents attributed this to the conservative anti-immigrant beliefs deeply embedded within the local community their college served.

A consistent finding when faculty and staff were asked during their interview to describe how they were impacted by the contact they had with undocumented students, was how much they learned by helping the students navigate the challenges they face. These interactions with undocumented students helped faculty and staff develop undocumented competence through practical experience. They learned about the financial challenges students struggled with and the difficulty they faced in pursuing their degree. They also described how their attitudes had changed to be more empathetic to students' situation through those interactions. These strong emotions that often arose out of their direct experiences with undocumented students were described by many of the faculty and staff interviewed as a motivator of their advocacy.

Another significant finding common among the advocates interviewed was the efforts they made to provide students with validation. They described how they helped them understand they were safe to disclose status and would be supported, even in the absence of many campus resources. They aimed to help students feel valued and respected for who they are, and they often took risks to visibly advocate and raise awareness among their faculty and staff colleagues. Yet most often this transformational resistance faculty and staff engaged in

on their campus, was described as an undercover advocacy to protect both themselves and the undocumented students for whom they are advocating.

Chapter 6

Synthesis of Key Findings and Recommendations for Application of Insights

In the midst of the political turmoil currently present in the United States, when it seems the society has seemingly taken giant strides backward and it has somehow become socially acceptable to express racist beliefs again, it is perhaps more important than ever to strive to raise awareness about the inequity that exists with vulnerable populations. It is however also equally important to be extremely cautious in how one proceeds in making efforts to accomplish this, and to ensure at each step that attempts to educate faculty and staff colleagues does not put students at risk unnecessarily.

My hope for this dissertation research study is that it can make a positive difference by raising awareness about an issue that participants clearly revealed is not presently discussed on campus, or very rarely so, and one which they have seen negatively impact the students they serve. As North Carolina continues to see an increase in the undocumented student population and the animosity towards undocumented students seem to grow stronger across the nation, it is even more imperative to seek ways to equip the faculty and staff at North Carolina community colleges with the tools they need to help this student population successfully overcome the challenges they face. By examining the ways in which participants who currently possess high knowledge of the challenges faced by this student population, have acquired that knowledge, the results of this study may help other educators become undocu-competent. By exploring the ways in which participants are engaged in transformational resistance and by inquiring about the strategies they use to support students, this study has the potential to share best practices that institutions may implement which could lead to an increased number of faculty and staff who become allies for Dreamers.

Several interviewees mentioned the impact of participating in this study as raising their awareness toward the issue or providing them the rare opportunity to discuss what they do know about this student population and what is necessary to meet their needs. One commented, “It's never brought up. You were the first person to bring it up to me aside from my students.” and another shared “I appreciate this interview and being able to express how I feel because I feel very strongly about this.” Other participants recognized their limited knowledge, “to be honest, it didn't really occur to me until I took the survey and saw the examples” or as expressed by another, “engaging in this study, has kind of made me think a little bit more about this topic”. A student services administrator at a small urban institution recognized the impact that their lack of knowledge about or attention to this issue may have on their students, “having answered your survey and talked to you a little bit about your research has kind of opened my eyes to the fact that I probably know less than I should about the students at my own institution that may be in this situation.” Perhaps these responses suggest this study will serve as a catalyst for initiating the dialogue on campus about undocumented students and the challenges they face. Now that the questions have been asked, and the issue has been raised, hopefully these faculty and staff members will continue to explore these conversations on their campuses.

Synthesis of Themes from Study Findings

When I examined the analysis of themes revealed in both the interview responses and the participants' interviews, there were many similarities. A clear picture emerged of the stance of Dreambuilders and the limited undocu-competence that exists among North Carolina Community Colleges. I used the themes that emerged to compose this poem.

I want to help more
 But I don't know enough
 Seeing their faces, hearing their fears
 Students are hardworking and deserving of equal rights
 Yet, they are denied and discriminated against
 Hiding, as we turn away and ignore
 It's heartbreaking to see the struggle
 So I try to provide validation and support
 As I am motivated to engage in advocacy
 To share the human story
 To raise awareness and give tools
 To fight for a better future ahead

Triangulation of Key Findings from Survey Responses and Interview Comments

The mixed methods of survey and interview within this study allowed for triangulation of responses and themes found were consistent across the data collected from each method. The quantitative analysis of the knowledge indicators on the survey responses revealed low levels of knowledge across the majority of respondents and that lack of knowledge was also described by the interview participants, emerging as a key finding from the qualitative analysis. Another significant finding present in the qualitative analysis of both survey responses and interview transcripts was the 'hidden' nature of this topic; the students hiding in fear so that their presence is hidden on campus and the avoidance of the topic among the strategic planning that occurs at the college with no consideration of initiatives that may be needed to assist this student population. This finding of 'hidden' was also present in the quantitative analysis, as evidenced by the extremely small percentages of respondents indicating there were any visible support strategies on their campus.

Contact with undocumented students was found to be valuable to study participants, as indicated both by the qualitative analysis of interview responses and the description of how those faculty and staff had been impacted by that experience, and from quantitative correlational analysis that revealed higher degree of contact is associated with increased knowledge and more favorable attitudes. The attitudes present in both the survey responses and the interview comments were slightly mixed but mostly leaning toward positive. The faculty and staff who were advocates for the undocumented student population expressed strong favorable attitudes toward these students' strengths and values and their positive contribution to our society. Advocates also described both in interviews and in open-ended survey responses how they provided validation on an individual basis to help students work through challenges

Another significant finding that emerged from both survey and interview was the study participants' strong desire to increase awareness among colleagues and the common belief that the college should offer professional development for faculty and staff about how to best help undocumented students. Most faculty and staff who participated in the study emphasized that the best way to increase undocu-competence among North Carolina community college educators is to share student stories, ideally from the student voices themselves. They themselves had been motivated to advocacy by the emotions generated during the firsthand experiences of working with these students and seeing the struggles they face and they expressed their beliefs that this would also have similar impact on their colleagues. However, there was caution against the potential danger for students in stepping out of the shadows and an adamant belief that the college needed to be prepared and able to protect them if the students decided to take a risk and engage in that partnership.

Recommendations for Building Undocu-Competence at NC Community Colleges

As also recommended by every faculty and staff member who participated in the interview process, it seems one clear step forward in increasing undocu-competence across North Carolina Community Colleges is the delivery of professional development. Perhaps it is also important to note that it may be most effective, as suggested by interview participants, if the professional development is required for all faculty and staff to attend. The professional development provided should make the issue real and tangible for faculty and staff, especially those who question whether it is an issue that is worth their time to learn about. Once they realize that these are students who sit in the seats of their classroom every day, with very real challenges, as opposed to some abstract ‘mythical’ undocumented student, to whom they can attribute stereotypical qualities, then it will motivate them to learn more. In summary the recommendations arising from this study with regard to the professional development that will build undocu-competence in the North Carolina community colleges are as follows:

1) Providing factual information that confronts myths

Since knowledge levels are low and the mixed attitudes seemed to often be based on inaccurate information, this suggests that providing sessions including basic factual information, would not only be one method of keeping the professional development politically neutral, but it would also help to prevent the unintentional harm caused by providing students’ misinformation and correct underlying assumptions that are fallacious.

2) Making it real to them

A significant finding within both the survey responses and the interviews were the impact of contact and exposure to undocumented students that helped make it a real, relevant, issue educators needed to pay attention to. To the extent possible, professional development should engage undocumented students enrolled at their own institution, which disrupts the abstract identity and instead helps faculty and staff see ‘real’ undocumented students.

3) Humanizing

Educators also discussed the impact of seeing faces and recognizing that undocumented students were human with the same dreams as other students. Professional development should emphasize the inequity when students are denied basic human rights.

4) Protect Students’ Identities

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the risk students are taking to disclose status or participate in advocacy efforts is definitely an important consideration and one that mandates educators take proper precautions to protect students from any adverse consequences that may follow them as a result of their willingness to step up and speak out, disclosing their identity publicly.

5) Interactive dialogue

As opposed to simply a presentation of information, high quality professional development that will have a significant impact should provide opportunities for attendees to engage in open interactive dialogue.

6) Sustained and ongoing

. Interviewees also discussed the benefit of having a format that provided for ongoing dialogue between colleagues, to continue discussing the issue, as opposed to just a single information session, since this will increase the likelihood of true change.

7) Practical applied focus- contextual pragmatic approach

The professional development should be pragmatic and contextual, providing practical tips educators can directly apply to their everyday practice that is timely and relevant, for instance teaching strategies for interaction and processes that validate students and encourage them to utilize the resources that will help them be successful.

8) Consider requiring attendance

Most interviewees discussed making the professional development mandatory, because if it was not required they felt a lot of the faculty and staff that are not knowledgeable about undocumented students and thus possibly those who would most benefit, might choose not to attend

In addition to these recommendations for professional development, after qualitative and quantitative analysis of survey responses and interviews, the findings of this study offer multiple implications for educators.

Implications for Educational Practitioners

The majority of the undocumented students across the United States are Latinx and those that do pursue post-secondary education, as previously noted, are much more likely to attend community colleges. Without any clear federal legislation or any consistent state policy, in NC the decision is left up to college administrators whether to admit undocumented students. There is limited research that examines how policies are

communicated to individual college personnel within the community college system. Yet despite the current demographics and tremendous growth of Latinx immigrants within North Carolina, the North Carolina State Board of Community Colleges mandated that undocumented immigrants be admitted as out-of-state students (North Carolina Community College System, 2009). Current admission standards require these students to pay out of state tuition. This policy prevents many undocumented students from even considering college as an attainable opportunity and yet today more than ever before higher education is a necessity for entrance into middle class society.

The themes of low knowledge, hidden needs and ‘pervasive invisibility’ that clearly emerged from both the survey responses and interviews in this study are consistent with the key findings in the study conducted by Nienhusser and Espino (2016) as described in Chapter 2, “ojos que no ven, corazón que no siente”, that the unique needs of undocumented students are often not only not met but they are not even seen (p.7). This hidden nature of their identity, and the minimal campus support that may be available but not visibly, contributes to the liminality students experience. In order to disrupt the systemic racism and inequity that is reproduced automatically and continues to marginalize student populations including undocumented students, one must recognize and challenge the norms that maintain it. That may mean engaging in uncomfortable dialogue with care that the emotions experienced don’t distract attention away from where it should be ameliorating inequity (DiAngelo, 2018). It is important that advocates for undocumented students are aware of the white fragility that may be encountered while engaging in dialogue with colleagues and strategically navigate those forces which seek to maintain the status quo.

Other recent research studies have also found that colleges seem to avoid directly discussing race and students of color, as well as undocumented students specifically, have discussed the negative impact to their self-esteem and belonging (Harper & Hurtado, 2007, Muñoz & Vigil, 2018). Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2014) describes the current era of race relations, as one that often includes “color-blind racism”, “sophisticated and subtle” and so sometimes even more dangerous than explicit racism because it is veiled in an ideology that “race no longer matters” (p.25). Researchers examining how this color-blind ideology affects the ‘anti-immigrant’ discourse explain “in this context, the reality of White Supremacy and racial dominance remains hidden or misinterpreted” (Douglas et al, 2015, p.1431). Even a well-intended argument, that all students should be treated the same, is itself a micro-aggression since it denies the importance of race and the racialized attitudes toward undocumented students, while simultaneously denying that students’ legal status impacts them and their ability to be successful in college. Muñoz and Vigil (2018) describe this as a form of ‘legal violence’, since it serves to perpetuate oppression, emphasizing the negative impact that institutional and systemic oppression has on undocumented students, “both immediate (feelings of lack of sense of belonging) and long-term effects (psychological stress leading to disengagement and attrition on campus)” (p. 12).

As educators engage in this transformational resistance, it is crucial they don’t neglect to recognize the population that has strong anti-immigrant sentiment, often deeply embedded. While this population among community college educators is a small percentage, as indicated by the exploration of attitudes in this study, they can be dangerous to students. It cannot be ignored that while certainly not the majority of participants, there is some strong anti-immigrant sentiment contained in a few of these responses. For instance, 10% of

respondents indicated they would deport all undocumented immigrants if given the choice, and an equivalent 10% would deny them the opportunity to enroll in post-secondary education, while 12% of respondents would end the DACA program. These numbers while small are significant and educators must take notice of them as they engage in advocacy. Allies both in this study as well as others recently conducted (Chen & Rhoads, 2016) have talked about the careful navigation, and necessary protection of student identities. As educators push for dialogue to occur on college campuses, and raise consciousness of this issue, there may be those who actively resist and so it's crucial to move forward cautiously and strategically. For instance, student identities don't have to be revealed in order for their stories to be shared in neutral blogs and other written formats.

Students often choose to disclose their status as they engage in advocacy to challenge stereotypes and humanize the undocumented immigrant population. This educational purpose, intended to inform others, as they engage in resistance by sharing their counterstories, empowers them to find their own voice as they come out of the shadows and reclaim their identity (Seif, 2016). As they engage in this advocacy, they "push for existence and achieve empowerment in a system meant to suppress and silence" (DeAngelo, Schuster, & Stebleton, 2016, p. 224). As undocumented students have become active in taking a stand and advocating for themselves and their peers, they have humanized the issue, but educators both in this study and other recent research also recognize "these students are putting themselves at risk because the situation is still there. People can be deported if they're caught" (Chen & Rhoads, 2016, p. 526). I don't mean to suggest students should be discouraged from disclosing their status and engaging in advocacy, but that as educators come alongside students who choose to share their counterstories as a form of advocacy, it is

important to keep this risk in mind and to take all possible precautions to protect students and their families from any potential harm.

Researchers have found that one of the best ways community colleges can demonstrate their institutional undocu-competence is to have faculty and staff who are prepared to be “visible advocates” for them, demonstrating a visual commitment as a college to serving undocumented students (Valenzuela et al, 2015, p.90). Research studies conducted with undocumented students who have shared their stories and factors that contributed or hindered their success, have consistently shown the positive impact of knowledgeable faculty and staff who can serve as mentors, by helping to “minimize institutional barriers and facilitate connections to resources” (Cervantes, Minero, & Brito, 2015, p.236). It is such a stressful experience for students to choose to disclose their identity and a crucial moment that can either lead to validation or reinforce stigmatizing, leading to disengagement and often then withdrawal. Without understanding the laws and policies that impact students’ educational experience, faculty and staff cannot respond meaningfully to meet undocumented students’ needs (Gildersleeve et al., 2010).

National education consortiums and organizations such as the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (2016) have recently proclaimed a focus on undocumented and DACAmented students as a priority (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). As a result, a greater number of institutions are now beginning to work towards becoming more ‘undocufriendly’ (Suarez-Orozco, Katsiaficas, Birchall, Alcantar, Hernandez, Garcia, Michikyan, Cerda, & Teranishi, 2015). Yet with the myriad of challenges undocumented students face, research has shown that simply increased access and funding is not sufficient to increase equitable outcomes. Even in DREAM states where undocumented students are

charged in-state tuition and in some cases have access to aid, the campus climate has still been a source of discrimination where students struggle with liminality unless there is comprehensive professional development for faculty and staff about best practices in meeting the unique needs of this student population (Ledesma, 2016; Muñoz & Vigil, 2018).

Researchers have recommended that colleges mandate trainings for administrators, faculty, and staff, on how to best serve the undocumented student population, especially in the classroom which is a space where students can experience direct oppression or alternatively direct support (Muñoz & Vigil, 2018).

Valenzuela et al (2015) also emphasize that the first and most important step in developing institutional undocu-competence is to provide training for faculty and staff. College personnel need to be knowledgeable about the unique circumstances that limit undocumented student enrollment, retention, transfer, and graduation. Once faculty, counselors, admissions staff, financial aid officers, and registrars are informed, they will be better able to establish institutional policies and procedures to reduce instances of exclusion and marginality (p.90).

All professional development offered should include a focus on valuing the contributions of undocumented students, their resilience, and their human rights. Both interviews and survey responses indicate participants' desire to learn more, and their hope that their college will provide more professional development opportunities. Specifically, 70% of respondents said they wished they knew more about undocumented students and 80% believed their institution should educate faculty and staff about the challenges undocumented students face and how they can help support them. Further research should be conducted on the types of

professional development that are the most effective at increasing the undocu-competence among faculty and staff.

DREAMzone is one example of a professional development program in Arizona that has been proven effective for increasing educators' self-efficacy to serve as advocates for undocumented students. Results from the evaluation research analyzing the program have found the program was successful in accomplishing "short-term cognitive change to sensitize practitioners to respond competently and efficaciously to the needs of undocumented students" (Cisneros & Cadenas, 2017, p.197). With successful results leading to positive change, the format of this professional development opportunity may be a good model to follow. DREAMzone starts by engaging participants with a self-assessment of their stereotypes and then facilitators dispel common myths. After providing key information and content that will be helpful for participants as they assist undocumented students, they invite a panel of undocumented students to humanize the experience as they seek to increase participants' empathy and level of cultural competence (Cisneros & Lopez, 2016).

The lack of academic preparation of a very large percentage of society has tremendous implications for the future of America's workforce. The Council of Economic Advisors has found that immigrants contribute positively to the U.S. economy with a greater innovation per capita rate than native born workers and also add to the national tax revenue, contributing to social security and Medicare at a time when the U.S. workforce is aging (Kochhar, 2006). The barriers that make higher education an impossible dream for so many undocumented immigrants could lead to even higher future costs to taxpayers in terms of healthcare services and criminal offenses (Drachman, 2006).

The voices that have emerged from LatCrit research urge educators to find ways to “explore ways to normalize multicultural students’ presence in our classrooms and social spaces, to validate their unique lives by including their experiences and by critically considering their counterstories”. By doing so they can create a “richer, more socially just college experience for all students” (Pyne & Means, 2013, p. 197). Based on the analysis of their study results, Stebleton and Aleixo (2015) made several recommendations for educational practitioners. They suggest that faculty must become more familiar with the needs, issues and assets of immigrant students and the resources that can best support them. They assert that institutions should provide training for their faculty and staff on the strengths of undocumented students and how faculty and staff can best provide validation for students as a method of support. They encourage faculty and staff to reach out and engage immigrant students intentionally through strategies of validation in the classroom, and also through mentoring relationships beyond the classroom that can serve as a form of validation.

The research based on contact theory, has confirmed that positive contact under particular conditions will reduce prejudice and increase acceptance. As individual educators become more familiar with undocumented immigrants through personal exposure, they become more receptive to liberal immigration policies (Moore, 2002). Educational practitioners who are allies must seek ways of helping increase exposure for their colleagues. Educational Administrators should provide professional development for faculty and staff, structured opportunities for engagement with undocumented students who can share their story, and clear institutional support for these positive contacts.

I previously conducted a project with some of the ESL students at a North Carolina Community College, many of whom are undocumented. Through the Spanish language, I

established trust with them after several meetings and they shared their stories of resilience. It difficult to return to my office across campus or to attend meetings as usual without thinking of those students and how we can do things better as an institution to be more inclusive. Through the interviews of the pilot project, students described the nurturing relationships they had formed with their instructor, and how encouraging it was for them in helping them to overcome the challenges they faced. They also described a general lack of connection with anyone else at the institution and this seemed to be correlated with a lack of future plans beyond the ESL program or even an awareness of what those options were.

Through the analysis of the interviewee's responses, I wrote the following poem from the themes that emerged:

Struggling for survival

In search of opportunity

Needing to be understood

Finding a family

Comfort and support

They gave me the tools

My responsibility

Preparing to move on

Not ready yet

Afraid to move forward

But now I have a future

This concept of trust they had established through the relationships they had formed with supportive allies on campus was a clear theme and students reflected on the sense of motivation and hope they had as a result of these positive relationships. This is consistent with the themes that have emerged from other research. Bensimon (2007) reported that “students with a history of social and educational marginalization attribute successful outcomes to the formation of supportive relationships with practitioners” who were responsive to their needs (2007, p.463-464).

The impact of the positive relationships and support received by institutional agents, as described by the ESL students in those interviews, suggest implications for educational practitioners. It is with adequate support, positive regard, advocacy, and critical consciousness that educational practitioners can have a direct impact not only on the quality of life for these students through an enhanced educational experience, but also help to increase retention and completion rates at their particular institution, and collectively across the nation. Through personal interaction and connection, the injustice and barriers that these students encounter due to their current status in the United States become evident and it is much harder to ignore the injustice when it has a face and a name.

Community college educators teach these students in their classrooms every day, who struggle silently, ashamed of their pasts, and fearful of their futures. As they face so many obstacles, undocumented students often seek emotional support from instructors, counselors, and peers. Institutional agents, both faculty and student affairs professionals, can offer a sense of hope for the students that motivates them to persist despite their struggles (Perez, Cortes, Ramos, & Coronado, 2010) Research centering on undocumented high school

students has shown that although they are very bright students with huge potential, the obstacles they face in the college application process, and the existing policies that limit their access to higher education often prevent them from pursuing a college degree (Oliveroz, 2005; Rincon, 2008). However, it has also been documented that transition to postsecondary institutions among undocumented high school students is facilitated through positive relationships with teachers and counselors (Gonzalez, 2010). Qualitative studies of undocumented college students also indicate that students express gratitude toward allies they have found within the higher education institutions and often credit them for helping them succeed (Bensimon, 2007; Stebleton & Aleixo, 2015). Carter (2005) showed how success in school is deeply shaped by feelings of inclusiveness in the school setting and explored how students with various ethnic backgrounds navigated the culture.

As with other first-generation college students, many of these students may not have family support networks that can provide information about accessing or succeeding in college. Yet they possess cultural capital and educators need to recognize the cultural community wealth they bring with them to the institution. The research on first generation students clearly documents the benefits of forming close relationships with positive allies within educational institutions who can help them obtain the proper information they need but this requires students to possess social consciousness (Stanton-Salazar, 2001). Stanton-Salazar (2011) defined institutional agents who serve as allies as those who challenge inequitable systems and structures and work toward the development of critical consciousness. Critical consciousness is defined as “an awareness of how institutional, historical, and systemic forces limit and promote the life opportunities for particular groups” (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2002, p.87). Based on undocumented students’ ‘network

orientation’ - their ability to trust institutional agents, they may be fearful of developing those relationships (Gonzalez, 2010). In addition to general knowledge about college access and success, these potential allies will also need to have information about how to help students with the unique challenges they will face in order to be able to help them successfully navigate their pathway despite those obstacles.

For instance, the majority of community colleges across the nation, and certainly the 58 within North Carolina, are commuter campuses. While many community college students may have to share a vehicle or deal with other types of transportation issues, undocumented immigrants in North Carolina may risk being arrested just to make it to class. This is especially true in rural areas. Students who are able to make connections with peers or find supportive allies in faculty and staff at the college, must depend on them to provide rides and often remain on campus for hours before or after their classes begin and end. With students showing such resilience and determination to persist and complete, it is hard to rationalize that there are still educators within North Carolina institutions, who question why undocumented students should be allowed to go to college. Yet we know as this study has demonstrated that there are, and we have identified perhaps some of the reasons why. One reason allies have identified that they advocate for these students is the investment that has already been made in these students since they were brought here as children and educated them through elementary, middle, and high schools. They are potential resources that the nation should not squander. Trueba (2004) explored the strengths these students possess as transnationals, the ability to learn and speak multiple languages, straddle two different cultures, and successfully navigate their multiple roles and relationships. Instead of taking

the typical deficit perspective, he argued that these students' cultural capital should be viewed as an invaluable cultural commodity.

In the Supreme Court Case, *Plyer v. Doe*, the Court stated that educating children, regardless of their immigration status, is essential for creating individuals who can function in society and contribute to the development of the United States (1982). It could be argued that while a high school education may have been sufficient for employment and full participation in society then, today, barring these students' access to higher education has the same effect, creating a permanent disability that they are unable to overcome. Studies have determined that those with a Bachelor's degree earn about \$30,000 more each year than those who only have a high school diploma (Greenstone & Looney, 2013). The United States is currently creating a sub-caste of humans who do not have access to equal human rights. This issue is one that demands policy change and federal or state legislation that recognizes the plight of these people. Regardless of how one feels about those who make a decision to come to the United States, those who are currently suffering most are the children who only know America as their homeland and yet are not invited to participate fully in society.

Many undocumented immigrants who could be potential students surround us in our daily lives, perhaps bagging groceries, cooking or serving meals in a restaurant, or fixing cars, destined for careers that do not require a college degree. This is not because they are not intellectually capable of obtaining one, nor because they don't desire to attend college, but because they are unable to afford even the tuition it requires to attend a community college when they are deemed a non-resident and forced to pay out of state tuition. Every American citizen has voting privileges and therefore the power to elect officials who will finally pass legislation that allows these students to become lawful members of society.

Representatives could be elected who also understand the possible contributions of the knowledge and skills of these undocumented immigrants that are currently wasted as they are prevented from reaching their full potential. In a study of new-immigrant destination states, Gallagher and Lippard (2011) found that one of the most important lessons learned was that “being proactive in creating positive relationships helps native-born citizens address their concerns with an outsider immigrant population, as well as encourage immigrants to assimilate more quickly and receive the services necessary to be productive citizens” (p.335). It could be inferred then that the same thing may be true for the number of Latinx students, including undocumented, who are enrolled at community college institutions. The more welcoming the environment, the more likely these students are to remain enrolled through to successful completion, and in a time of declining enrollment, this could be crucial for all educators, especially college administrators, to keep in mind when creating policies and procedures and considering providing professional development to educate their faculty and staff about methods of making the students feel welcome on campus. In addition to the practical implications arising from this study, there were multiple themes revealed that merit additional attention in future research.

Suggestions for Future Research

Due to the timing of this study, the survey was deployed at the end of the semester when some faculty may have been less likely to see the email notification inviting them to participate in the survey. Although there was a fairly good size sample of participants that responded to the survey, this could have affected the results based on which faculty and staff self-selected to complete the survey and it is possible that future studies conducted at different times of the academic year would include responses from a greater number of

participants or participants that more widely represented a greater number of community colleges across North Carolina. If the survey window was kept open for a longer period of time, this could have also increased the number of participants. Although interviewees expressed some level of knowledge about undocumented students and all but one identified themselves as allies and expressed very favorable attitudes, it may have been beneficial to conduct interviews with a greater number of participants who had higher levels of knowledge and were more actively involved in advocacy, that could have thoroughly explained their development of undocu-competence. Future studies may utilize other methods of recruiting participants with even higher levels of undocu-competence to gather their input and provide an even deeper level of insight.

This study has explored individual educators' levels of undocu-competence, their knowledge and attitudes toward the undocumented student population. The survey and interviews in this study did also collect a base level of data, as reported by study participants, about the support strategies currently offered at the colleges where participants were employed. Within the last few years researchers have defined the term Institutional Undocu-Competence (IUC) as a framework for assessing how well institutions are serving this student population (Valenzuela, Perez, Perez, Montiel, Chaparro, 2015). This moves beyond a simple awareness of diversity and equality and expects social justice action. This concept should be more widely explored across institution type and location.

Future educational inquiry can utilize the theory of Institutional Undocu-Competence to examine the degree of receptivity and ally work at institutions of higher education around the United States. Researchers could inventory strategies that have been implemented by educators at institutions where there are high levels of IUC and share those best practices.

The theory could also be used to explore what seems to impact the IUC at an institution and perhaps the attitudes and knowledge possessed by faculty and staff at institutions on both ends of the spectrum. I have included a visual image below that demonstrates the dichotomy. Multiple institutional factors could be examined using a scale measurement along the dichotomy as a tool of analysis to assess the level of IUC at each particular institution. For instance, to what extent do institutional policies seem to be reflective of racist nativism ideals that create barriers for undocumented students or to what extent does the institution provide administrative support for positive contact to occur and allies to engage in transformational resistance. Surveys and interviews could be conducted with faculty and staff and analyzed through qualitative coding, with a lens focused on the institution rather than the individual, to identify and explore common factors institutions may share that have high IUC. If factors were determined to be meaningful components of the process of building IUC at an institution, then those steps could be followed by a greater number of institutions and professional development for faculty and staff could be delivered, to create environments where DREAMers are increasingly able to be successful.

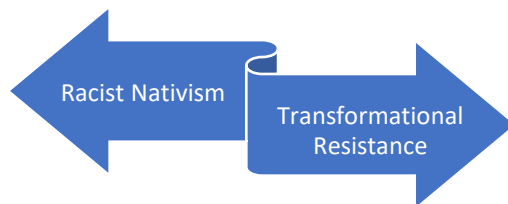


Figure 14. Range of Institutional Undocu-Competence

I believe that education can be a source of freedom, a method of interrogating and opposing domination and subordination within the norms of K-16 education. It is my belief that through critical reflection, awareness could be raised regarding the systemic barriers for undocumented students, and best practices that could address them within the current North

Carolina community college system. Using the framework of Critical Race Theory and LatCrit Theory, researchers could examine the barriers undocumented students face in both gaining access to and attending the community colleges in North Carolina and explore the most effective methods of engaging in systemic institutional transformation to remove those barriers. The strategies discovered could be shared with educators across North Carolina who could become advocates and allies for this undocumented student population, and tackle the change required to facilitate inclusive excellence in all NC community colleges.

When the educators in this study were asked within the survey questions and interviews to describe their advocacy, they seemed to focus on whether they had personally engaged in political advocacy. But I would extend the concept of advocacy to encompass much of the work these faculty, staff, and administrators engage in on a daily basis to provide undocumented students an invaluable source of support and to attempt to raise consciousness among their peers, even if it is largely through individual conversations, because these actions are focused on “fairness, equality and equity” (Crawford, 2015). In the absence of federal nor state legislation in North Carolina, campus-based action provides a vital source of support for undocumented students in resistance to the silence (Barnhardt et al., 2017). Faculty and staff who engage in transformational resistance should be cautious of focusing their goal on broad scale immigration reform at the national level, although I believe that this work will ultimately impact national reform. The immediate focus however needs to be institutional transformation with educational equity and inclusive excellence as a driving goal. By rebuilding institutional systems to be empowering instead of oppressive as they have been designed, the barriers can be removed that stand in the way of a better future for ALL NC community college students and the world as a whole.

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Appendix A

Undocu-Competence

You have been invited to take part in this research study about community college educators' knowledge and attitudes toward undocumented students. By doing this study we hope to learn how educators have gained the knowledge they possess or developed the attitudes they hold toward undocumented students, and what types of supportive strategies they may use to assist this student population.

What are possible harms or discomforts that I might experience during the research?

To the best of the researcher's knowledge, the risk of harm for participating in this research study is no more than you would experience in everyday life.

What are the possible benefits of this research?

There may be no personal benefit from your participation but the information gained by doing this research may help others in the future by uncovering strategies that could be used to increase the level of undocu-competence within community colleges across North Carolina. As educators develop an increased level of undocu-competence, they may increase their skill and ability to engage in equitable strategies that assist students enrolled at their institution and ultimately lead to a greater educated populace.

How will you keep my private information confidential?

We will make every effort to prevent anyone who is not on the research team from knowing that you gave us information or what that information is. Although you may provide contact information within one item on the survey, this information will be kept separate from responses to the other survey items. Your data will be protected under the full extent of the law. Survey data will be stored through the duration of this project, and discarded within one year. It is possible that aggregate data from this study will be stripped of identifiers and used in future research without any possible way of linking data to you specifically.

The privacy of undocumented students will be protected since you will be asked not to disclose names or other identifiable information about second parties within my survey responses and anything inadvertently shared will not be included in findings nor disclosed to any other party.

Do I have to participate? What else should I know?

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. If you choose not to volunteer, there will be no penalty and you will not lose any benefits or rights you would normally have. If you decide to take part in the study you still have the right to decide at any time that you no longer want to continue. There will be no penalty and no loss of benefits or rights if you decide at any time to stop participating in the study.

Who can I contact if I have questions?

The people conducting this study will be available to answer any questions concerning this research, now or in the future. You may contact the Principal Investigator, Stacy Holliday, at 336-249-8186 ext. 6763. If you have questions about your rights as someone taking part in research, contact the Appalachian

Institutional Review Board Administrator at 828-262-2692 (days), through email at irb@appstate.edu or at Appalachian State University, Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, IRB Administrator, Boone, NC 28608.

By clicking 'Next' below to continue this survey you are acknowledging informed consent, that you have been made aware of the possible risks and benefits of this survey and have been given the opportunity to decline to participate, but are choosing to be an active participant in this study.

Thank you for your time!

This research project has been approved by the Institutional Review Board at Appalachian State University on May 1, 2018.

1. Do you provide your informed consent to participate in this study?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Undocu-Competence

2. Please indicate which of the following most closely describes the role you currently hold at your institution?

- ☐ Adjunct Faculty
- ☐ Full Time Faculty
- ☐ Student Affairs/Services Staff
- ☐ Institutional Effectiveness, Information Technology, or Marketing Staff
- ☐ Finance or Human Resources Staff
- ☐ Academic Support Staff
- ☐ Academic Administrator
- ☐ Student Affairs/Services Administrator
- ☐ Other (please specify)

3. Please indicate which description below most closely relates to your institution?

- ☐ Large Rural ☐ Large Urban ☐ Small Rural ☐ Small Urban ☐ Online
-

4. Please indicate your knowledge of the following questions:

	Yes	No	Unsure
Are undocumented students allowed to enroll in NC Community Colleges?			
Are undocumented students charged in-state tuition for their courses in North Carolina?			
Are undocumented students eligible to apply for federal financial aid?			
Are undocumented students who have been awarded DACA charged in-state tuition for their courses in North Carolina?			
Can undocumented students apply for citizenship after their DACA status is approved?			
Can undocumented students apply for and receive a driver's license?			

If you answered 'unsure' about any of the questions above, please indicate whether you are interested in learning more? If yes, what steps may you take? If no, please explain why.

Undocu-Competence

5. Please indicate your response to each of the following statements:

	Yes	No
I was born in a country other than the United States	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
One of my parents was born in a country other than the United States	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I personally know at least one student who is currently undocumented	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know of a student who is undocumented but do not know them personally	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I personally know an individual (not a student) who is undocumented	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have attended an information session, training or other type of professional development event about undocumented students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My institution has offered an information session, training or other type of professional development event about undocumented students, but I was unable to attend	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My institution has offered an information session, training or other type of professional development event about undocumented students, but I did not want to attend	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My institution has not offered an information session, training or other type of professional development event about undocumented students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A student has discussed their immigration status with me previously	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A student has previously discussed challenges they face as a result of their immigration status	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would be willing to discuss a student's immigration status and any challenges they faced, if they came to me to disclose	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We have some (at least one) undocumented students who are enrolled at our college	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We have many undocumented students enrolled at our college		

1. Rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Undocumented students should be able to apply for and receive financial aid.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Undocumented students should not be allowed to enroll in college.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Undocumented students should be charged in-state tuition.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Undocumented students should be given a path to citizenship.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Undocumented students should be eligible for legal residency regardless of age or length of time in the United States	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Your college offers opportunities for faculty and staff to learn about the challenges undocumented students face	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Your college should offer more opportunities for faculty and staff to learn about the challenges undocumented students face and how they can help support them.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I wish I had more knowledge about undocumented students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I wish I had more frequent interaction with undocumented students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am an active advocate for undocumented students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am an ally for undocumented students, but not actively engaged in advocacy.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

1. Please summarize your opinion about undocumented students and/or undocumented immigration in general and briefly explain what you believe has influenced that opinion.

2. Please describe the contact you may have had with undocumented students specifically or undocumented immigrants more generally. How do you think that has impacted your opinion and beliefs about this student population?

3. Please indicate the level of your knowledge about each of the following:

	Low, no interest in learning more	Low, would like to learn more	Moderate	High
The steps that must be taken to legally immigrate to the United States	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The options available for undocumented students to enroll and pay for college	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The challenges undocumented students must frequently deal with	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The requirements students must meet to qualify for DACA	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The basic premise of the DREAM Act that has been previously proposed in Congress	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The specific components of the DREAM Act that has been previously proposed in Congress	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

If you indicated high levels of knowledge, please explain how you gained that knowledge or alternatively if you're not as motivated to spend time learning about undocumented students, please explain why not.

4. Please indicate whether you would favor or oppose legislation that would accomplish the following:

	Favor	Oppose	No Opinion
Provide all undocumented immigrants who currently reside in the US the legal right to stay permanently	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Build a wall along the US-Mexico border	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Deport all undocumented immigrants currently in the U.S.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
End the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program and Remove that Temporary Protected Status	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Allow those who have been granted temporary status through the Deferred Action for Children Arrivals program to apply for citizenship	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Federal Legislation that Requires States to Charge Undocumented Students In-State Tuition if they meet the same requirements as US Citizens who are charged In-State Tuition	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Deny Undocumented Immigrants the Right to Enroll at any US College or University	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

11. Please describe the challenges you think undocumented students face:

Undocu-Competence

12. Please check all of the following you believe about undocumented students, the challenges they face, and/or the strengths they possess:

- ☐ Fear of family separation due to deportation
- ☐ Transportation challenges often due to an inability to obtain a drivers' license
- ☐ Pride in their ability to overcome the challenges they face and enroll in college
- ☐ Guilt over not actively contributing to the family's income by working full time
- ☐ The ability to speak two or more languages and navigate two or more cultures
- ☐ Anxiety over their ability to remain enrolled and complete due to finances
- ☐ Resilience and determination to successfully complete their courses and graduate
- ☐ Shame about their past and their undocumented status
- ☐ Feeling as though they don't belong, and aren't actually welcome on campus due to status
- ☐ Homesickness, missing their native country and culture
- ☐ I'm not interested in recognizing any challenges faced by undocumented students
- ☐ Undocumented students are responsible for any challenges they face, it is their fault, or their parents
- ☐ As educators we should help undocumented students cope with the challenges they face
- ☐ Undocumented students are some of our most dedicated students because of all the challenges they overcome

Please share any other thoughts you may have about strengths and challenges:

Undocu-Competence

13. Please check any (all) of the following support strategies your college currently offers for Undocumented Students:

- ☐ Club or student organization that provides support for undocumented students
- ☐ Dedicated person on staff that can assist with questions and help undocumented students through the enrollment process
- ☐ Professional Development for Faculty and Staff about undocumented students
- ☐ Faculty and Staff who have Undocu-Ally Posters Placed in their Offices or Similar Methods of Demonstrating their Support
- ☐ Information Sessions for Students, Faculty, and Staff where Undocumented Students can Share their Stories
- ☐ A Resource Center where Undocumented Students can be Referred for Assistance
- ☐ Information Sessions in Local High Schools presented by College Staff for Undocumented students and their families
- ☐ I am not aware that the college offers any of these strategies

Please describe any other support strategies your college offers or any additional details you'd like to provide to elaborate on any of those listed above:

14. Are you personally engaged in any support activities for undocumented students or take any active role in supporting them and their success? If so, please explain how you are involved and why.

15. Are you willing to be contacted to possibly participate in an interview that will last approximately 45 minutes to an hour?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

16. If you would be willing to potentially be contacted for a follow-up interview please provide your name, best contact phone number and email address here:

Name

Phone Number

Email Address

For all Survey Respondents:

If you would like to be entered into a drawing for a \$30 Amazon gift card please enter your email address at this link:

Prize Drawing

(<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/UndocuCompetenceDrawing>)

Appendix B

Interview Guide

- How long have you been working at your current institution and what is your role there?
- Can you briefly describe your beliefs about undocumented students?
 - Would you say that you know a lot about undocumented students?
 - How did you gain the knowledge you have?
 - Would you consider yourself an ally for undocumented students and why?
 - Have your beliefs changed over time or have you always felt the same?
 - If they have changed, what would you say has caused that change?
- Do you believe you have many undocumented students at your institution?
 - Do you think you're often aware of students' status? Are others on campus aware?
 - If so, how does that awareness occur? Can you tell me about a specific example?
 - If not, do you encourage students to disclose so that you can help them, and if so, how?
- Can you describe the general attitude and knowledge levels on campus about undocumented students?
 - Do you think many of your colleagues understand the challenges they face?
 - Are undocumented students welcome on your campus? Why or why not?
 - Can you describe a specific experience you're aware of, that caused an undocumented student to feel welcome or on the contrary, to feel unwelcome?
 - Are there any efforts to educate faculty and staff about undocumented students and if so how have you been involved with those?
- Can you describe the contact you've had with undocumented students on your campus?
 - Can you tell me about a specific experience you've had with a particular student?
 - How have your beliefs about undocumented students been impacted through these experiences?
 - Have any students shared with you, challenges they may have because of their status?
- Can you describe any advocacy you have directly engaged in for undocumented students?
 - Why do you engage in advocacy for undocumented students?
 - How is that perceived by your colleagues and have they joined you in that work?
 - Have you felt supported by leadership and how have they shown that support?
 - What do you think would be helpful to increase knowledge and favorable attitudes toward undocumented students at your institution?

Appendix C

Recruitment Email

I am a doctoral student at Appalachian State University conducting research for my dissertation. The purpose of this study is to explore knowledge and attitudes faculty and staff at North Carolina Community Colleges hold toward undocumented students. This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board at Appalachian State University and the first page of the survey includes the informed consent form that you will need to view before participating in this study.

If you would like to participate in the first phase of this research project, please click this link to access the survey. (link included here). It should only take approximately 20 minutes of your time. You will have an opportunity to provide your email address if you'd like to be entered into a drawing for a \$30 Amazon gift card.

You will also be asked if you'd like to participate in a follow up interview and if you'd like to participate in that second phase, you may be contacted after you complete the survey. There is no obligation to participate in this study or to participate in the interview if you do complete the survey. Your information will remain confidential and no identifiable information will be disclosed with anyone other than the researcher at any time.

If you have any questions please contact me at 336-249-8186 or my faculty advisor, Vachel Miller, at 828-262-2280.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Stacy Holliday

Appendix D

Additional Voices

I wish I knew more

<i>"I'm eager to learn more based on my current knowledge level. I don't know that I'd be the most resourceful person for an undocumented student."</i>
<i>"I want to help...But this is one of those things where I don't really know how to get involved."</i>
<i>I don't know if I'm knowledgeable enough to lead that charge by myself. I would have to team up with some other individuals who are way more knowledgeable than myself to lead those efforts.</i>

No "Seat at the Table"

<i>"What I said earlier about it not being in front of everyone's face it's not really in front of my face anymore and I know that sounds, I mean it's not the best answer but... We still work with the students, but it's not an everyday issue. He's not here. The student isn't in here every day with me saying, Hey, this is what happened last night, what happened today. I need your help. I need your help."</i>
<i>"We know they're enrolled here, but how are we supporting them as students or as humans? I mean, we're not doing it to my knowledge."</i>
<i>"I don't think there's a real effort to try to welcome them necessarily."</i>
<i>"our goal is to try to help everyone and make ourselves accessible to everyone in our communities, but I don't know that we're quite doing that with this particular population."</i>
<i>"we don't do any, you know, we're not really doing anything specifically to support these students"</i>

Students are truly afraid, now more than ever

<i>"We have one right now that's going through this and it just kills me to hear about all the fear and anxiety around it."</i>
<i>"a lot of people talked about kind of being fearful or anxious about what they would do if they were picked up, you know, worried about what would happen to their families or their kids. Um, and just kind of. I remember one student telling me that she had specific instructions, House keys, you know, stuff that she left with a friend now just in case something happens to me that she was, that this person would kind of be there, stepped in for"</i>

“right after trump was elected, there was a sharp spike in fear in the students who had talked to me like, like palpable fear, but now on campus itself now”

“something that they would have to keep buried because they don't see people openly being supportive of it and because I would think it's such a big secret for so many of them and it's not something you want to just, you know, you have to guard it, you can't just guess if someone's going to be an ally or not”

How have interviewees gained the knowledge they do possess?

“I just started getting some that are, you know, they have DACA paper work, they have their right to work papers. I did not realize until just recently that they don't qualify for instate tuition.”

“I have been intentional with going to trainings and asking pointed questions and trying to help my students get into college”

“I had to educate myself regarding the laws in North Carolina, regarding the laws in the United States”

“sitting down with a student who says Ms. Dot Lackner. I graduated high school. I have a 4.2 GPA. I only know North Carolina and now you're telling me I have to come up with four grand to come to school for a semester. I can't do that. My family can't do that.”

Understanding Financial Challenges and Other Barriers

The student had excellent grades and you know, they were excellent scholars, but it was just that one thing that was holding them back from even trying to get an internship and then to get some experience in their chosen fields.

And then the last stent involved doing a clinical rotation and the hospital in which they required her to have a social security number. So originally, she could not finish the course and that really bothered me because they have a young person who's striving to be, you know, a responsible member in the community and in the professional world, you know, and then there's this barrier that's going to prevent people from pursuing things like that.

Some of the biggest obstacles are the federal regulation that prohibits undocumented students from earning a professional license. So, telling a young student that per federal government they cannot be a nurse, um, is not a fun conversation. So, they can't be a radiographer and they can't be this, they can't be that. Um, that has always been difficult for me because I pride myself in opening up opportunities to students specifically through the CCP program. So, having to relay boundaries, limitations to a student, it's not easy for the students

Undocu-Competence: Attitudes among Advocates

<i>I believe that undocumented students are, from my experience, I've always found them to be hardworking, um, discipline and eager to learn. I've also experienced them to be anxious about their status and their future. So that has also been a factor in their educational path.</i>
<i>"If they're living here and there, even if they're not paying taxes, the, the good old-fashioned way, they're buying groceries, they're buying cars, they're buying, you know, they're paying rent are contributing to the economy. They're not living under a rock."</i>
<i>"I think they should be able to get financial aid. I think they should be able to access higher ed without any kind of a problem. They should be able to get instate tuition. Um, I think they should be able to get driver's license without any problem. I think they should be able to work. Um, so yeah, because that, that's pretty much it. I mean like they should be treated like everybody else. "</i>
<i>"I see the potential for these individuals to contribute to our society probably already contributing to our society in ways that we might not fully understand"</i>
<i>"They're here just trying to provide a better education and income for their children and they just want to work and be good people. And so I think that they should be allowed to have opportunities to, you know, go to school and become legal."</i>
<i>" I think that we are open door policy institutions and therefore they should be allowed in and that we should be doing everything we can to support them and keep them in the U.S. after they graduate"</i>
<i>"Um, a lot of people, including a lot of people in my family, look at undocumented students the same way that you might look at a violent felon. It's like they broke the law, they don't belong here. To me, undocumented students in a lot of cases came here with their families when they were little kids and you know, they don't have any control over, over their immigration status because they were brought here as children. Other people, you know, a lot of people who came here as, as adults because they were trying to get away from gang violence, from having guns pulled on their families in their homes or even if it's not something that they had from an economy where they make two or \$3 a day and just can't support their families and honestly, if, you know, the reasons that any of them are here, if I were in their shoes, how, and I had a chance to come to the US to, to get a better life in a safe life, I would probably do the same thing."</i>
<i>"You know, are they in violation of a law? Yes, but I don't look at crossing the border illegally or overstaying of these as being in the same category of law violation as, assault and battery or murder or something like that. It's a continuum and there are violations that are more serious than others and I don't see this as a, you know, something that should follow somebody for their entire life."</i>

How do you justify breaking the law?

<i>"I think you can be too far one way or too far the other. Um, I think it's dangerous to, you know, Kinda have a somewhat of a bleeding heart and just say, oh, we should just completely open the doors and welcome everyone."</i>

"this just brings back the ongoing conversation we have in North Carolina community college system, which is do more with less and how many times do you do more with less. And, you know, what I've learned over the years of, of my decades of working in the system is that things that are important to the system get funded and supported"

"but should they have access to higher education access? Yes. Instate tuition, no, I don't agree with that. Um, because instate tuition rates are a subsidy that's subsidized by the taxpayers. So, you know, the same way, if my child wanted to go out of state, I shouldn't get a subsidy for that."

Are Attitudes Influenced by Racist Nativism?

"There was a faculty member in one of the (campus all-read discussion) sessions that I lead and she said that 'Enrique's Journey' was a ridiculous book. Who cares what happens. He was illegal and as far as she was concerned, he should never have been allowed to come to this country and he should be kicked out "

"So what's going on with these people? I mean, I'm like, you know, tell me, please tell me what is going on. When you present facts and you present also an emotional appeal to the head and the heart, and still people respond with 'those illegal Mexicans' "

"So I hear a lot of, you know, their feelings of the bad treatment that they get, that people don't want them here and assume certain things about them because of the fact that they weren't born in this country and at the end that they're undocumented."

"I had invited some kids from our, not just kids, but adults from a community class and she came in and he started asking her, do you pay taxes? How can you be here if you're not paying taxes? And she didn't even understand what he was asking her, but her husband works here. They owned the home here, you know, so they're paying taxes, they're doing everything they're supposed to. And you know, I had to lead a conversation about diversity when I wasn't planning on it that day. I had to step around his untactful questions and make them tactical for her. So we've talked about we need to do in the fall, don't put people like me in a situation where they have to do that. Especially if they've never dealt with this kind of stuff here on campus before."

"And the accusation (from some faculty and staff) is that, oh, the undocumented are, um, you know, break more laws and then citizens, which is of course untrue. Um, and the undocumented, you know, are a drain on our, um, on our medical facilities and on our legal facilities and our legal institutions, which of course is not true."

"I've been in a classroom where there was discussion and, and you have these discussion about they're taking our jobs. I mean, I hear that quite a bit. And why are they here? They need to go back to where they came from. I've heard that, I've heard that rhetoric."

"I've seen people coming in with a little bit of a language barrier and their staff just doesn't take the extra moment or two to either explain it differently or to walk them to the place they need to go, you know, and they just show a little bit of frustration that they're not maybe fully understanding directions, even registered for a class, you know, let alone starting in the, in the classroom setting and that I have observed."

"And I hate to say that and I really hope that's not true about anybody on our campus, but I think because most undocumented people in North Carolina are Hispanic and they look a little bit different from the majority, which is white. I think there's a racial element too."

Are negative attitudes reflective of the local community?

I feel that where I work is probably more of a conservative area of the state. Then you know, where I live, which is a more liberal area, which is why it is shocking to me to hear such negative attitudes.

When the economy was so bad and people couldn't find jobs, but if you were willing to take a job for minimum wage, was there someone else who didn't take the job that got upset because you were willing to work for less? But that's kinda gone away too. I think it's just the feeling that began because there's so much misconception. There's this feeling that these folks just walk in and take all these things, you know, they're going to get free child care or they're going to get health care, but that's not true, unless you know they're about to die in the hospital, but they would treat anybody for that reason. I just think it's a complete misunderstanding of what they get.

The fact that we live in the south and the fact that you know, you look at nationally and you look at locally that, you know, there are people that are resistant in the field that we shouldn't have undocumented people living in our country, that they should all go. I would just venture to guess that there are some people here on our campus that would fall into that category.

Is this a worthy investment of my time?

"I don't know if there would be anybody that we actively opposed as more so than just I'm not as interested in this issue and I'm just not going to take the time to go do it. You know, I don't feel like it's important enough for my time. I can't envision anyone that would like actively protest or complain about it"

"I think it's always this idea that we should treat all students the same and kind of that's the way that you shoot, you have to view all students is they're the same. You don't need to get out in, you know, kind of in the middle of what's going on with them personally, you know, I guess it's this idea of objectivity and you don't, you don't need to get so involved."

"I don't know if people feel like, well I don't know. I don't know if there's any undocumented students. Why should I spend my time, you know, learning how to help undocumented students navigate the system, is this really going to benefit anyone?"

How can educators help students feel valued and accepted for who they are?

<i>"I motivate them and encourage them and help them and make them feel like they're the greatest thing on earth because they can speak two languages and I believe it too."</i>
<i>"Some of our intake documents, enrollment steps have been published in both English and in Spanish and I think that, you know, those are some tangible ways we support students."</i>
<i>"reaching out to the high school counselors that we have partnerships with and saying, listen, we have career and college promise courses as early as ninth grade, please work with us and identifying, um, on your end, your students who are undocumented or who have deferred action status so we can help you maximize their experience"</i>
<i>"Allowing them to speak Spanish in the classroom works pretty well and my Spanish is not great. And it used to frighten me to let students speak Spanish because I was like, oh my God, they're talking about me. But I had this experience one time when I was teaching and I had a pair of cousins who sat in the back of one of my developmental writing classes and um, they were, they were supposed to be doing exercises, individual exercises, and they were back there whispering in Spanish. I was like, and I'd said, you know, English, English only in the classroom. And one of them looked up and he was like, well, I was helping him to understand. And then I was like, oh, I'm a horrible person because I just took away somebody's primary learning avenue because I wouldn't let them talk to each other in the classroom, you know? So now that doesn't scare me anymore, now I, I understand the necessity for that."</i>

What campus resources are available to assist undocumented students?

<i>"we have one Latino Latina advisor and as see her role is mentoring hundreds of students, you know, um, and I think that's because she looks like them. They know that she gets it, you know, they, they can be, they're more comfortable speaking with her and their parents seem to engage on higher levels."</i>
<i>"because we have such a good rapport and because I know who she is, I'm generally direct students to her specifically."</i>

How can undocumented students take advantage of other campus resources?

<i>"I'm unaware of any resources specifically catered to students with that issue, but we do have a foundation and we do have a food pantry and things like that"</i>
<i>"We have a kind of a general area that just helps students with a variety of kind of extra academic issues, whether it's transportation or food security issues with housing or, or anything else that really comes up."</i>

Existing Professional Development about Undocumented Students at NC Community Colleges

<i>"I don't remember who led it. It was much more of a discussion type thing than, than having one person more or less present, if that makes sense. So, so a lot of what happened in that session was a group discussing, um, their knowledge of what we can do, you know, for instance, what scholarships are available to undocumented students, things like that."</i>
<i>"there was a lot of talk about things like if the student fills out the FAFSA, they can't get financial aid but that filling out the Fafsa and they make them eligible for different scholarships. So, a lot of sort of nuts and bolts type information about how to help the students and what things they're able to do."</i>
<i>"And so the college as a whole supports us learning and bringing back and sharing what it is we've learned as it relates to undocumented students."</i>
<i>"equity across the campus and as being part of that group, a large part of our conversation, had to deal with undocumented students and in that group, it included not only college employees but also community representatives"</i>

What should be included in Professional Development Sessions?

<i>I think that is definitely one that needs to be mentioned more and is definitely one that people need to have explicit instruction. Like if someone comes to you and you know, give puts off these signals, here is a way that you can help share with them that you're an ally if they come to you and explicitly say, I'm an undocumented student, here is where you can help direct them to get resources. Or here is a point person who could, you know, help them more with this situation or you know, here's what you can do.</i>
<i>probably the optimal situation would be, you know, for me as a faculty member to walk into a training and for my institution to say, you know, this is a real issue, this is what's going on, this is how we as an institution are handling it. This is the admissions process for these students. Um, and this is what you need to know when they're in your classroom.</i>
<i>I mean I guess some kind of education you'd say provided even just a Webinar just to kind of an overview of who they are and why they're here, what the options are for, um, legal status.</i>
<i>I think the number one driver because we can always make a judgment about something that we don't know, but until you interact with a human being, you can maybe have a biased opinion on what you think the laws should be.</i>

Making it real to them

<i>if I could make it, they see the impact that just maybe changing a couple of little things would have that would make a person feel, you know, that to make it personal and put a little bit of the onus on them, like you have the power to do this individually.</i>

<i>It wasn't real to them. You have to find some kind of way to make it real to people. We all connect on the same things. We're all in education, so we value learning always. You know, somebody who's never had a door just slammed in their face. They need to see what that's like for those students. I think that will change maybe the way they interact with students or the way maybe the way they, their belief system in a way when you really come to see that</i>
<i>But I think just the general awareness, you know, there may be people that just, you know, it just hasn't occurred to them that, that these students are here and what they, what they might be facing.</i>
<i>something as simple as each student writes a couple sentences about their barriers, about there. They're struggled with trying to pursue higher education, rebuild out at this time, particular informational or training sessions, but like I said earlier, I think a lot of times people don't realize that it's happening or they don't really care until present it to them or put it in their face and so I think that may be a way to one, inform them, but also let them know that, hey, this happening right here on our campus.</i>
<i>Makes it real. It makes it one of our students and brings not just the face but a face and a name and in a story and the understanding that we are far more similar than we are dissimilar</i>

Format of Professional Development to be Offered

<i>"required professional development opportunities that whether they want it to or not, they would be exposed to someone's story and I think that that would, um, at some point resonate with them."</i>
<i>"And it has to be not just one, it has to be over several, maybe show a film, show several movies. It has to be over several different meetings."</i>
<i>"Well, I don't know that we've ever been told policies about. Like I said, I didn't know that students were "being charged out of state tuition when they've been here their entire lives. So maybe just talk. I think there, there could be meetings among faculty about the different policies or issues that undocumented students face, especially when it impacts academic performance or whatever."</i>
<i>"Now I would probably ask if there was a student in particular who could share an experience, have time for interaction, make it engaging and stay away from the political piece of the discussion."</i>
<i>"having small group discussions but having an undocumented student there and sort of more of a facilitated small group, instead of the all hands stuff and it'd be all hands, but just multiple sessions. I like the required attendance kind of thing. Yeah, it's so hard, right? Because exposure is not necessarily what undocumented students want. And so, it's a hard thing to really go, yeah, let's talk about it and like, here's our undocumented students they're here talking about..."</i>

Vita

Stacy Holliday was born in Charlotte, North Carolina to William and Barbara Holliday. She graduated from Appalachian State University with a B.S. in Psychology in 2002 and graduated from the University of NC at Charlotte with a M.Ed. in Teaching English as a Second Language in 2006. Ms. Holliday taught English as a Second Language in Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools and then moved into a district leadership role in Assessment and Accountability, before deciding to pursue a career in Higher Education. She also began taking online courses in a Masters in Counseling program at University of West Alabama which she later completed in 2013. Ms. Holliday became the Director of International Programs and Admissions at the University of NC School of the Arts and concurrently pursued an Ed.S. in Higher Education Administration from Appalachian which she completed in 2009. Ms. Holliday has always been passionate about serving under-represented student populations and decided to pursue a leadership role at Davidson County Community College. She served as the Associate Dean of Campus Innovations, Grants, and Student Success, in a leadership role in the Institutional Effectiveness division, leading both the college's Institutional Research team and the institution's participation in national student success initiatives such as Achieving the Dream, Completion by Design, and the Frontier Set. She has also served as the lead SACS QEP evaluator for multiple colleges and universities and as Board member and Chair of the North Carolina Association of International Educators. She has provided faculty development nationally as a member of TeamUp with Cengage Learning. Ms. Holliday now serves as a Senior Program Manager with Jobs for the Future and has a leadership role in the Student Success Center Network, serving half of the community colleges in the United States, across 16 states.